



QUÆ SCRIPSI

A BOOK OF VERSE

FRANCIS H. BUTLER

1902

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G. P. Field.

with the author's best regards.

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BY

FRANCIS H. BUTLER.

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INDEX.

	PAGE
For My Dearest	I
A Song of Seasons	2
Parting	4
Gladys	6
Lux in Tenebris	8
My First Love	12
I Can Wait	16
To the Daisy	20
To the Cuckoo	22
The Shepherd	23
Dissecting	30
Farewell	32
A Song of Spring	33
Told by the Nightingale	35
A Flower's Story	37
Home from Hospital	38
A Sigh from the Sea	39
A Tale of Oxford	41
The Siesta	43
A Late November Dawn	45
Little Things	46
Day and Night	47

	PAGE
Then and After	48
Love	49
Debating	51
For Her Letter	53
Sister Fanny	55
A Lay of Love	57
Columba Mea	58
To Doris	59
On an Armless Venus	60
Lieder ohne Worte	61
On Reading a Book of Poems	62
To a Slain Cat	63
To a Spider	64
Frida Asleep	65
On a Caged Song-Thrush	66
At Eventide	67
Ballade of Death	68
To Phyllis (Triolets)	70
The Ride	71
Præterita	72
Dreams	74
Severance	76
Night	78
Last Words	79
What She Said	80
A Song of Winter	81
A Reply	82
Glad Tears	83
Real Single Blessedness	84
Love's Language	85
Waiting in Winter	86
To One Distant	87

INDEX.

vii

	PAGE
On Finding Phœbe Gone	88
Maryland	89
Past and Perfect	91
Eheu !	92
The Rising Storm	93
The Rain	94
A Sea-Nymph's Song	96
My Sweetheart	98
A Complaint	99
Old Friendship	100
A Palæontological Episode	101
Fossil Impressions in Oxford Clay	103
Diana's Apology	104
Incognita's Portrait	106
Vespertilio	109
Per Contra	113
Afternoon Callers	115
The Village Maiden's Message	116
A Winter Letter	118
De Gustibus	119
Solo	120
The Heavens (from the German of Löwenstein)	121
Invocation to the Sun (after a translation from the Finnish)	122

VERSE FOR CHILDREN.

My Spotty	125
Comparisons	128
The Chicks that Saw the World	130
Pussy	132
Kitchen Company	133
Jumbo's Invitation	138

	PAGE
The Omen	141
Mrs Midget and Lady Dora Fidget	142
The Gallant and the Lady	149
The Sailor's Farewell	152
Something Better	154
Mary's Departure	155
The Student to his Cat	157
Fair-Day	159
Beaching the Boat	160
My Pet's Message	161
Lullaby	163

INDEX OF FIRST LINES.

	PAGE
A dozen kisses ask I not	80
Anon he felt her hand	51
A seraph, suffused with the sunset's glow	8
As one who tired of work, yet loath to play	62
Assoiled at length from Winter's spite	2
Authors not yet in Paradise	119
A vision she one short-lived afternoon	92
Awaked from sleep in Spring's enchanted ground	37
Bared are the shaken woods by wind and sleet	45
Bid me not sleep ; for though the shadows fall	78
Bird, whose voice comes floating clearly	22
Bright eyes were Mary's	91
"Bring hither," the baron infuriate cries	71
Dame Midget looked as neat a mouse	142
Dear dada, mother wants you back	116
Dear life, farewell ! And yet they ask me why	32
Dear madcap Madge's merry mood was stilled	76
Escaped from thankless toil the morning through	41
Fair flower, my constant friend in childhood's years	20

	PAGE
Farewell, dear heart ! A few short moments now	79
Friends may forsake me	89
From the Market, London city	125
 " How high the heavens I fain would know "	 121
" Hush," said the woodbine	35
 I cut, wondering cut	 30
I love you, dear Bunny	138
In dreams by night meseemed lay dead	74
I never liked the men at all	104
In former days	96
In lecture-room, ah, long ago !	103
I played the songs she loved in by-gone years	61
I wandered alone where the nightingale's song	48
I would it were given me still to hear	118
I would not be a fish	154
 Lo, a woman in grey, with scant grizzled locks	 72
Looking on her when garden walks were gay	6
Loved father, evening's come at last	161
Love is the gift of sight	49
Lullaby, baby, the bees are in bed	163
Luxurious lounge, right dreamy all day	157
 Meek puss, that stopp'st the gutter, stiffening, cold	 63
Midnight had struck. The Persian cat	133
Midst in my soul a throne	106
My Best-beloved, it matters not	1
My darling cat, whene'er I see	132
My darling, life no light hath had	87
My dear handsome Willie has hurried away	152

INDEX OF FIRST LINES.

xi

	PAGE
My Love has a bosom both soft and brown	98
My Love is fair and bright	85
My Margaret, sweet maid with mazy hair	4
Nothing I knew, till thou cam'st near	70
No time for play!	160
O Cupid, romping, ruthless boy	99
O'erwhelmed with sleep the shepherd lay	88
Of all the puzzling things designed by Fate	64
Oh, happy she unmarried, who would fain	84
Old friendship, not unlike the frog	100
On a spring-tide day	33
Perched by the casement are Flora and May	159
Phyllis wrought, where beamed the sun	57
Said Mr Cock to Mrs Hen	130
Said the Cock to the Owl	128
Shepherds who watched thee go can tell	155
Sleepless wretch with eyeballs bleary	68
Smiling she slept. As oft at close of day	65
Some hydrocephalous idiot	115
Sweet bird, whose notes have charmed my careless ear	66
Swooping from scaur and brackeney brae	23
The autumn gold is gone from hedge and tree	55
The raven, for a little joke	141
There lived a budding damsel long ago	60
The sun with sweltering heat all day	101
The wind has caught the flowing tide	93
They bore my fever-stricken girl away	38

	PAGE
They sat at eve upon a stile	109
Though Hetty was happy	83
Though often I've said it	81
Till I bow before death shall I bless the glad day	16
'Tis hush, for Night has left her eastern fane	67
'Tis sweet with the poetic few	120
To 'scape his rock-rent ship the seaman sought	39
Tricking in splendour long coast-lines dim	47
Undimmed are still the stars she loved when here	58
Welcome, Sun, thy visage showing	122
When deepening snowdrifts long have held the plain	59
When nought is seen but ice and snow	86
When secure behind a nettle	113
When will there be an ending	94
While some on modish trifles rant	53
Who with Love a-maying goes	46
Worn with the city's sultry glare	43
Yes, the frog was too hot	149
You ask me why I love.—I cannot tell	82
You ask what saint of all first blessed my eyes	12

FOR MY DEAREST.

My Best-beloved, it matters not
If Death our names from memory blot !
 When, weary, out of Time's full wain
 We one day slip, nor mount again,
But sleep in some secluded spot,
We simply share the common lot.
'Tis ours to say, " Me loves, I wot,
 As no one else, till parting's pain,
 My Best-beloved."

While some for pleasures pined-for plot—
Stable as children's shell-built grot,
 Whose durance fitful wills ordain,
 Our joy is this, each heart's refrain :—
"Of all God's gifts in thee I got
 My best, Beloved."

A SONG OF SEASONS.

ASSOILED at length from Winter's spite,
Still young, in tenderest leaf,
A tree, mid spring-tide airs and light,
Thus spake with soul in grief:—
 “Winds, ye that erst with pulsing breast
 My boughs from frosty cares caressed,
Waste not on me your generous might :
 In vain I live who none have blessed.

“O sun, yon whilom snow-wrapped glade,
Now by thy sovran will
In new-wrought rustling robes arrayed,
Thy presence needeth still.
 Look not on losel me, O sun !
 I dwine with yearning, nought have done :
Help prisoned shoot and backward blade
 That fret for freedom well-nigh won.”

Then answered sun and kindly breeze,
 “What bale-bird, desert-born,
Thou tiny thing amongst the trees,
 Hath proved thy life forworn ?

Mark how, thy whispering leaves below,
Learning with lovesome hues to glow,—
Pined-for by myriad patient bees,
A thousand blossoms wait to blow.”

Unsoothed by Summer's peace profound,
The tree could only sigh
And say, “The sorriest weed around
Cumb'reth not earth as I.
Past me the honey-seekers fare ;
My flowerets, wont to scent the air,
With withered petals strew the ground :
Would that I straight their lot might share !”

“Lorn little one,” exclaimed an oak
Revered of all the wood,
“Seemeth to thee the ax-man's stroke
The sole remaining good ?
Sith the bees now, for draughts divine,
Choose other chalices than thine,
Canst thou stern Duty's claims revoke ?—
Doth Heaven her rights in thee resign ?

“Bemoan no more thy beauty's doom,—
Thy blossoms' fragrance spent ;
The life that late bestirred thy bloom
To lovelier fruit is lent.
Ne'er will thine earthly wit foresee
The future fixed by Fate's decree :
Till Time thy fallen trunk entomb
To dure in faith sufficeth thee.”

PARTING.

MY Margaret, sweet maid with mazy hair
 Embowering eyes whose glance enslaves yet blesses,
When love-lorn suitors throng to speak thee fair,
 Freighting with sighs the breeze that stirs thy tresses,
Say, will my lonesome lot be still thy care,—
 This hand be missed which thine in parting presses?

When Dawn's bright cohorts, grisly Night dispelling,
 Bestrew with golden spoil the eastern grey,—
When mounting laverocks trill, their mute mates telling
 The marvels born at quickening touch of Day,
Then will thy spirit leave its happy dwelling
 With mine aloft in love's new beams to stray?

When evening zephyrs, wafting fresh from roses
 Whispered good-nights, have lulled thee, Love, to sleep,—
What time the world from weary toil reposes,
 And influence of boon stars, mid slumbers deep,
The gates that sever souls akin uncloses,
 Wilt thou with me thy tryst as wonted keep?

Farewell, lithe form and soul-illumined face,
Whereon who looks must needs wax worthy lover,—
E'en as a crag uncouth gains tender grace
From virgin snows its jagged crest that cover,
Or blue-eyed gentian, jewelling its base,
Borrows her beauty from the heavens above her !

Nigh thou wilt be, though ruthless Fate awhile
Put love-linked arms and close-pressed lips asunder.
As one adrift, who nears in dreams some isle
Seen erst in sunny climes with yearning wonder,
Shall I approach my absent Dear, whose smile
Grief's gloomiest power can ne'er from memory plunder.

GLADYS.

(Oct. 23, 1888—Feb. 25, 1901.)

LOOKING on her when garden walks were gay
With ranked forget-me-nots and roses rare,—
When light-winged birds, from dawn till shut of day,
With songs ecstatic waked the slumberous air,
We said, "Our Gladys, flushed with health and mirth,—
Whose lustrous eyes, like twain stars sapphirine,
Seem lit by suns unseen of night-dimmed earth,—
Whose voice is rich with tenderness divine,—
Excels these all, as noon the morning grey."

Her pets adored her. Some Orphean spell
Her accents owned; for, spake she but the word,
Her doves, a silvern shower, about her fell.
The starlings, when her soft approach was heard,
Ceased not from delving in the new-mown lawn;
The old stray cat she stroked and daily fed
Bounded to meet her, like a frolic fawn,
Soon as his ear attent had marked her tread:
Yea, all things living loved her passing well.

We saw her last when ice-flakes, gathered deep,
Had bid our snowdrop-buds unopened bide.
Sun-warmed, they stirred anon from marble sleep;
But oh, our loveliest blossom, Gladys, died!
The little lamb we nightly led to fold,—
That angel-sprite our circling arms had pressed,
With face a pearly dream in clouds of gold,
Pale as the lilies plucked that strewed her breast,—
Our heart's whole core we gave to earth to keep.

Yes, she was gone! Ours was the parching pain
Of grief's great drought. "Lives there a God?" we cried,—
"A God who grants to withering deserts rain,
Yet lets us droop, our rill of joy denied?"
Silence brought answer :—"Gladys knelt in prayer
To One Whose works to her were wells of bliss;
And He Who fashioned her so sweetly fair,
Whatever seems, would ne'er do aught amiss."
Then dewy peace refreshed our souls again.

LUX IN TENEBRIS.

A SERAPH, suffused with the sunset's glow,
In Paradise planted fair seeds arow,
 E'en amaranth seeds, as the spindrift light,
 As ripple-swept shimmer of moonbeams bright.

Sweet were the scents of the eventide ;
Gay was the west in rich vermeil dyed ;
 But sad was the seraph, and dark his mien,
 For he thought of a world that he late had seen,
Where daily for love were the desolate sighing,
And the children, God's confidants, lone lay dying ;
 And drops from his brimming eyes' chalice rolled
 That glistered as opals enringed in gold.
A moment he sobbingly heaved a sigh
Ere, turning his vision toward heaven on high,
 He murmured, "'Tis strange ! for the Father knows
 That the plant of earth's anguish luxuriant grows,

And that oft, when he walked 'mongst his human kin,
The Son of Man wept o'er the fruits of sin.

Enough, though, I wot, is my present care—

This home of God's guests to make wondrous fair.
Yea, peace," said the seraph, "my soul be still!
The wrong may come right, by the Father's will."

Then his hands from his sorrow-lined face he drew,
But saw not, for tears, in the ether blue,
How, wafted aloft by his garment's sway,
There floated one feather-light seed away.

When planets sailed forth from their havened rest,
Ruled calm without cloud in the angel's breast,
His smile sweeter far than, as old tales tell,
Was hers by whose witchery Ilium fell.

'Neath the quickening sun and the mild-eyed moon,
The fresh-risen amaranths blossomed soon.

Descended then Gabriel bright from heaven,
And cried, "Seraph-minister, seven times seven—
No more and not less—were thy seeds to sow:
Say, where does the flower that is lacking grow?"

Spake the seraph, "Perchance, but I cannot tell,
From my bosom a seed, as some spent star, fell,
And now may be drifting, a gem astray,
In the richly dight zone of the Milky Way,
Or, carried by brotherly breezes, beam
Where the Northern lights over gaunt ice-fields gleam.
But swift will I gird me, and seek, full fain,
Till the seed or its offspring be brought again."

Now many a league must the seraph fly ;
The seasons waned swiftly, whole years went by,
And nought could reveal to him, none could tell
Of the seed that he, sorrowing, sought for well.

Aweary and worn with his labours past,
Dejected he hied to dull earth at last,
Where, yearning for daybreak, he mused awhile,
His seat by a fount in a courtyard vile.

Soon dawn with its whispers the plane-trees stirred,
While querulous chirps from low eaves were heard,
And near he beheld, in the lifting haze,
His amaranth full in the sun's slant rays,—
More lovely, in raiment of spring-time drest,
Than aught he had nurtured in regions blest.

Right softly, as mother whose babe needs rest,
He happed the fair flower in his dewy vest ;
But lo ! from earth's squalor as forth he sped,
Came a murmur:—"Thank Heaven, if that weed be dead!"

More precious than ever does Paradise seem,
As its hill-tops afar in the sunlight gleam ;
But, ere he its glorious confines nears,
The seraph great Gabriel's accents hears :—
"O fleet one, for Paradise joyous bound,
Thy patience and prayers have their guerdon found.
I have watched all thy wanderings to and fro,
And fully thy heart's fondest secrets know.

I saw, as the bitter winds swept the world,
How hither and thither thy seed was hurled,
Till, sinking as weary and sick with toil,
It fashioned a root in unholy soil,
While burgeoned the stem midst a reckless crew,
Who grieve, now too late, that unprized it grew.
Though sweet are the gifts of thy favoured field,
Yet sweeter the world's rugged waste may yield,
Where blasts of adversity beat amain,
And froward and chill is the sunless rain.
Good grows of the grief bred of earth-born sins,
And God can make perfect what pain begins :
Thy flower which, unfostered, proved passing fair
Its blooms in the pleasaunce of Heaven shall bear."

MY FIRST LOVE.

You ask what saint of all first blessed my eyes
In Cupid's region.

"All," my sweet spouse, permit me to premise,
Make not a legion.

Of early Loves 'twere false to say, I fear,
I had not any ;
But dames with your discernment gifted, Dear,
I knew not many.

My pilot heart, in years long past, 'tis true,
Bemused, benighted,
Steered an erratic course : my haven—you—
Had not been sighted.

The time I met (if you must know it pat)
My earliest sweeting
Was June, just forty years ago, and at
A children's meeting.

'Tis well in weighty things precise to be,—
The facts to fix :—
My age was four months over seven, you see ;
My idol's, six.

Not yet for me romantic trains of thought
Had left love's siding ;
But speedily her signal virtues brought
Them out of hiding.

Her voice waked vibrant chords within my soul
Untouched before ;
My shallop, sped by love and past control,
Spurned reason's shore.

Her hair I still remember—dark in tint
As ivy-berry ;—
Her eyes, which mirthful glanced with sudden glint,—
Attractive very.

Indeed, I think it must have been her eyes'
Resplendent sparkling
Set passion flaming where it ember-wise
Had smouldered darkling.

My rabbits' eyes had nothing like their hue
Or lambent lustre ;
And frowns her charming forehead, well I knew,
Could never muster.

This rhapsody perchance sounds over fine,
Your good sense shocking ;
But, really, all about her seemed divine,
From snood to stocking.

With age one's views of strict propriety grow
Of course much sounder :
My inclination *then* was just to throw
My arms around her ;

But that a something queenly in her way
Bade me demur,
And thoughts of what prosaic eld might say
To me and her.

And so, with admiration unexpressed,
I sate me near her,
And, raptured, dreamed the brightest spirit blest
Could not be dearer.

How cross-eyed Fate is apt our bliss to leaven,
I next rehearse :—
My perfect cherub, lacking wings for heaven,
Went home with " Nurse."

Afar from her, through London's varied scene
My footsteps bore me,
Her eyes beholden still ;—their dazzling sheen
Was still before me.

My First-adored ! Again, except in visions,
I have not met her :
Now conning o'er my life, through Time's elisions,
I half forget her.

Such is my tale. The lesson now you ask
That underlies it.—
Although, when moral peeps from history's mask,
Folk seldom prize it,

Learn this :—The good we never meant to sow
Oft comeliest thrives ;
And, maugre self and wayward chance, I know
The best of wives.

“ I CAN WAIT.”

A TALE FROM LIFE.

“ There is a history in all men’s lives.”—SHAKESPEARE.

TILL I bow before death shall I bless the glad day
When the mists of a night-time were melted away,
And my sun arose clear in life’s lessening grey,
Bidding youth’s budding hopes with fresh blossoms be gay.

O’er the cold sombre vault of my spirit’s dark scene,
As an angel dim earth and heaven’s glory between,
Sped love’s mellowing light ; and with mystical sheen
Glowed the fields where but stars wan and spectral had been.

But how of my Dear’s subtle charm can I tell,
I who cannot interpret rich harmony’s spell,
Read the rune ever-varied of cloud-kissing fell,
Or the mirrored lore learn of the vale’s dewy well ?

Beyond earth her winged glances my raptured soul bore,
And her smile shone as radiance from Heaven’s open door ;
Like some gentle flood lapping a listening shore,
Swift my senses her accents’ soft ripple stole o’er.

As on Dian aloft in her silvery car,—
As on blooms that some ice-guarded precipice star
On my darling I gazed, when I durst, from afar :
The safe harbour I sought seemed a surge-smitten scar.

But one eve to her brother—for love thrilled my brain—
"Could I wed," I confessed, "it is her I would gain ;"
And he floutingly answered in bantering strain,
"She adores and soon marries a handsomer swain."

Then he bid me farewell with a laugh and light jest ;
And I crawled to my home with an agonized breast,
For a night of dark dreams and of racking unrest,
In a land of desires but unsatisfied quest.

"Oh ! why should this hapless world ever seem fair,
If its best must be scathed by heart-harrowing care ?
Rises life as a stream in the pure mountain air
To be lost at the last in a swamp of despair ?"

Thus I mused as I woke with a feverish start :
Youth had led me to Joy, Fate had forced us apart ;
Precious peace I had pawned in a profitless mart,
And no comfort remained for my desolate heart.

From a meal all untouched as I turned me aside,
Lo ! a letter—"Perchance still more sorrow !"—I spied.
"Ah !" methought, "what it bodes can but little betide
A poor wretch whose heart's dearest hopes yesterday died."

Painstakingly penned by some delicate hand,
Breathing fragrance of blooms from some sun-favoured land,
Was the missive my weary eyes carelessly scanned.—
“Why I write,” were its words, “you will soon understand.

“Jests baseless a happy heart’s harvest may blight ;
And vain trifling with truth naught can ever prove right :
Not less distant from deed than is darkness from light
Is the tale that was told by my brother to-night.

“In justice to self and in duty to you,
Must I tear with my scorn the false picture he drew :
That my wedding is nigh, need I say, is untrue,
When there ne’er has come near me a lover to woo ?”

I read, and with feelings of shame was oppressed
That the being on earth whom of all I loved best,
Through the fault of my headstrong vain passion confessed,
Had been aught by a gossip’s glib gabble distressed.

And so, when my working day’s penance was o’er,
I found her, my heart with contrition right sore ;
But meseemed richer roses her dimpled cheeks wore,—
That her ways were more winning, less shy than before.

For courage I glanced at the gentle grey eyes,
Then faltered, as caitiff ere basely he dies,
“May you pardon accord, though your judgment despise
One who uttered in folly words rash and unwise.

"Of women none ever confided in me,
Still I wot that in fancy a maid should be free ;—
Should a vine of worth cling to a sapless young tree,
Or perfection be linked to poor penniless me ?

"Now, though nothing save you could my thirsty soul sate,
Not with mine would I selfishly tangle thy fate."—
Thus I said. But, behold ! laughing love was elate
In her look as she whispered me clear, "I can wait."

For seven lagging twelvemonths my comfort and aid,
Blithe as blackbird full-throated, by tempest unstayed,
Contentedly carolled my bonny sweet maid
Till our marriage of sunshine that knew not a shade ;—

No gloom ere the hour when, as weeping dawn nighed,
Lay my sweetheart, my children's leal mother, my bride,
Of the fairest of flowers in love's Eden the pride,
Chill as snowflakes and lorn of her life at my side.

And now, when the busy world's murmurs abate,
And afresh memory flows, rich with fondly prized freight,
Comes her voice to me back, as from Heaven's happy gate :—
"Bear thou bravely the ills of thy lonely estate ;
'Tis for thee, with love endless, undimmed, that I wait."

TO THE DAISY.

FAIR flower, my constant friend in childhood's years,
Whose pensive grace was wont mine eyes with tears
 To overfill,
Untold bright blooms since then have made me glad,
But thee, my guileless goddess, simply clad,
 I worship still.

Sweeter to me thy bloom with homely look
Than to the sage the quaintest, costliest book
 Shrined on his shelf!
Some saintly one thou seemest, never proud,—
Matchless, yet moving 'mongst the common crowd,
 Forgetting self.

Thou art the flower that most of many fair
Remembereth me of one beyond compare,—
 Mine own true maid.
Cheery thou bid'st, come drought or days of gloom,
Thy hope in heaven ;—at autumn's dirge of doom
 Art not afraid.

And though thou blench before the winter's stour,—
Of stormy buffets, earth-born creatures' dower,
 Feel the full smart,
Thou bowest not thy head for numbing fears,
But bravely 'gainst the welkin's slings and spears
 Shieldest thy heart.

When tearful hours demand thy smile's eclipse,
A coronal out of their crimson tips
 Thy flowerets make :
Then muse I on the world of charm that slept
In sprightly Silvia, wakened when she wept
 For love's dear sake.

Dainty as she, whose soul could ne'er endure
A thing of darkness, thou thine eyelids pure
 Closest ere night ;
And e'en as she, who unto only one
Openeth her heart, thou lookest to the sun
 For life and light .

TO THE CUCKOO.

BIRD, whose voice comes floating clearly,
Harbinger of full-robed Spring,
Flute-like notes are thine, and cheerly
Rousest thou, while woodlands ring,
Blooms we mortals cherish dearly.
Fain would I, approaching nearly,
Learn of thee a song to sing.

Oft will men of tyrants bellow,
Seeking praise from pampered throngs.—
Flitting, careless who thy fellow,
Harping not on helpless wrongs,
Tireless thou, with music mellow,
Blithe by dawn or evening yellow,
Bidd'st the sluggard burst his thongs.

“Shun,” thou singest, “wastrels prosing
Still of vanquished winter's strife,
Present duty's rede o'erglozing.—
Grow to realms with sunbeams rife ;
Leave to dullards listless dozing ;
Wake to action ; cease from posing ;
Grasp in full the gift of life.”

THE SHEPHERD.*

Vix sibi quisque parem de millibus invenit unum ;
Aut si sors dederit tandem non aspera votis,
Illum inopina dies, qua non speraveris hora,
Surripit, æternum linquens in sæcula damnum.

MILTON—*Epitaphium Damonis*, 108-111.

SWOOPING from scaur and brackeny brae
On byre and cot beneath,
And shaking them, as brach the prey
Betwixt her savage teeth,—

Loud piping every cranny through,
Coursed fierce the bitter blast ;
And still the tempest wilder grew
Beneath a sky o'ercast.

The noontide's mist had changed to snow,
Which, drifting fast and deep,
Must soon a murderous mantle strow
On new-born lambs asleep.

* Founded on the tale in *Memoirs of a Highland Lady. The Autobiography of Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus*, 1797-1830, pp. 206, 207.

The shepherd called his trusty hound ;
With no complaint, though sad,
His wife his brawny chest around
Spread thick his Highland plaid.

Ruddy from glowing peats the light
Leapt through the opened door ;
Without, a trackless waste of white
Gleamed man and dog before.

'Mongst lashing boughs the snowflakes spin ;
The wintry gale blows high ;
From out the elemental din
Comes faint a last "Good-bye."

From fire to trim and house to busk,
Her wheel, her batch of bread,
The lone wife's thoughts through gathering dusk
Towards her husband sped.

And spinning nigh the fir-wood's flame,
Should e'er the gale desist,
Longing to hear him call her name,
She bows her head to list.

Dawn spreads where late the darkness hung,
Yet still her watch she keeps.
Dread thought ! Perchance, the drifts among,
Aylastingly he sleeps.

Have snowflakes—fell as maidens pure
Can prove when sisters stray—
Unwilling mortal taint to dure,
With death bestrown his way?

Can he whose sweetness changed her life,
Who more than life was dear,
Have perished far from her, his wife,—
No friend or helper near?

E'en now, may be, as morning broke,
When lulled the storm at last,
While watchful angels welcome spoke,
His spirit heavenward passed.

Wrung by her first great sorrow's throe,
She wrests the door aside
To gaze on glistening wreaths of snow
That every footprint hide.

When, sick, she turns her glance again
From morning's pageant fair,
The light that thrids the frosted pane,
Illumes her loved one's chair.

Not long it seemed since, girl and lad,
They culled the milk-white heather,
And e'en mid parting's griefs grew glad
At thoughts of years together.

And God had granted all they sought
Or hopeful heart could pray :
Was now the cup of bliss He brought
Wrenched ruthlessly away ?

Is love's delight but treasure tossed
On Time's tempestuous strand,
Which, snatched by grudging waves, is lost
Beneath the finder's hand ?

The air blows keen from off the brae ;
Within the lowly cot ;
The chilly hearth with ash grows grey :
The sorrower heeds them not.

Dark in her tortured soul's unrest
Despair's creations teem ;
The past appears a tyrant's jest,
And Providence a dream.

O God, with dutiful delight
We laud thy wondrous ways
Till care begins our bliss to blight ;
We then forget to praise !

The wife bereft, with heartfelt ruth
Her homely neighbours see,
And press with fluent skill the truth
That all their weird must dree.

Man's road in life God's fingers trace :
If fondest friends must part,
He flies in Providence's face
Who breaks therefor his heart.

As stone she sits, nor sheds a tear,
But sighs, with drooping head,
"He more than all the world was dear ;
Oh would that I were dead !"

In vain the shepherd's track was sought
Through glen, o'er moss, o'er hill ;
The summer came with flowerets fraught,—
The lost was missing still.

Brown were the brakes with autumn's kiss
Before the ledge was spied,
Where, midway down a deep abyss,
Master and collie died.

The kirkyaird mound was grassing o'er
'Neath which long months had lain
The untimely bairn the widow bore
Ere fever smote her brain.

Now, nigh the babe he ne'er had seen
Yet oft unborn had blessed,
Whose soul had won to his, I ween,
The father too had rest.

A lonely primrose lingering
When kindred blooms are dead,—
A swallow left with drooping wing
When south her peers have fled

The widow seemed, whose reason's sun
In sorrow's clouds had set :
She wept no more her absent one,
But deemed him living yet.

His quick return expecting ay,
About her work she sped
As busily as ere the day
When first she mourned him dead.

The yarn her fingers deftly spun
She showed with honest pride,—
Caps for the bairn that lay fordone
Its father's bones beside.

E'en as a burn which warbling flows
'Mongst woods of leafage bare,—
As one through murky vaults that goes
Dreaming of mansions fair,

So lived she. Sometimes, though, at eve
Around with weary eyes
She looked, a heavy sigh would heave,
And talk in wandering wise.

But aught that irked the soul forlorn
Had vanished ere the dew ;
And cheerily at early morn
She sought her tasks anew.

Hope-wafted still, the fluttering soul
Earth's stormy boundaries passed ;
The weary pinions reached their goal :
Love found its mate at last.

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Thou who at dread Affliction's thrall
Would'st gird and sore repine,
Know to thy fellowmen befall
As poignant pangs as thine.

Leave sorrow's solitudes, and learn
Where balm of comfort grows :
A talisman 'gainst grief discern
In lessening others' woes.

DISSECTING.

I cut, wondering cut :
How strange it is to see
This mass so chill, without a will,
Is shapen yet as we !

I cut, boldly cut,
Where once a scratch would smart :
Now nought can sway this sapless clay,
Or rouse the drudging heart.

I cut, calmly cut :
This sunk eye cannot gaze,
Or mark my steel the clues reveal
Of life's mysterious maze.

I cut, museful cut :
This tongue no more shall speak ;
No thrill of ire, no speech of fire
Can change this pallid cheek.

I cut, freely cut :

Why not? The life is sped ;

By me is grieved no bone bereaved
Of covering shred by shred.

I cut, tearless cut :

Here's nothing friend will claim,

Though oft, mayhap, a mother's lap
Hath warmed this breathless frame.

I cut, grimly cut :

Better to lie this corse—

Thus stone-numb sleep—than graveward creep
Dogged by a life's remorse.

FAREWELL.

DEAR life, farewell! And yet they ask me why
I turn and sigh.

Ravish the op'ning blossom from its stem,
Crush it, and ask of them,
"Shall this not die?"

Go, tell ye them that mock my mournful hours
How droop the flowers
When blows the desert blast upon their sprays :
False visions seem their days
Of spring-tide showers.

My light, farewell! But scarce will men believe
My heart must grieve ;
They bid me smile and be as I have been.
Have they the daisy seen
Closing at eve ?

A SONG OF SPRING.

ON a spring-tide day,
An icicle clung
To a leaf-reft spray
That a stream o'erhung.

Asked the purling stream,
"Wilt thou flow with me,
My spirit's bright dream,
To the sapphire sea?"

Said the ice-gem, "What
If I loosed my hold,—
Chose with thine my lot,
And thy heart waxed cold?"

"Must I now forget
My old peaceful days
In the whirl and fret
Of thy rock-barred ways?"

QUÆ SCRIPSI.

Spake the glistening burn,
With the sun aglow,
“Must I vainly yearn
Who adore thee so?”

But the sun, whose gaze
Bade the waters thrill,
’Gan warm with his rays
The icicle chill.

And ere Evening red
Struck his camp far west,
The icicle sped
To the stream’s broad breast.

In his strong arms carried,
Oft sighed she low,
“Ah! why have I tarried
Who love thee so?”

TOLD BY THE NIGHTINGALE.

"HUSH!" said the woodbine,
"Nobody knows,
Never I breathed it to aught that blows,
That the choice of my heart is yon rich-cheeked rose."

Whispered the rose then,
"Warmly, I weet,
Wistful-eyed comrades my glances greet;
Still is none as my fair clinging woodbine sweet."

Faltered the woodbine,
"Thicket and field
Solace unprized for my sadness yield,
Which would swift by the breath of the rose be healed."

"South winds," the rose wept,
"Waft me in vain
Odours of Araby's wealthiest plain:
'Tis the balm of the woodbine my breast would gain.

“Life would have meaning,
If at my side
Loving, might clasp me, before I died,
What of all I count dear 'neath the welkin wide.”

“Bright,” sobbed the woodbine,
“Beams mother Earth,
Yet shall I never more bless my birth
Till my treasured one plenish my bosom's dearth.”

Love, king of comfort,
Sauntering by,
Hearing the rose and wan wood-flower sigh,
In his cincture close bound them, his heart anigh.

A FLOWER'S STORY.

AWAKED from sleep in Spring's enchanted ground,
'Mongst myriad fellow-flowers a joy to see,
I looked on one anear me, star-becrowned,
And cried, "Ah ! Loveliest, let me live for thee."

Alas ! came soon the lord of all the land,
Who prized its wealth of bloom and tender green,
And bade his servitor with reverent hand
Plant in his sun-blest courts my pure-souled queen.

So now I neither mourn my spring-tide spent,
Nor jocund am though summer scenes be gay ;
But daily sighs my heart that none is sent
To take me to my Sweetest far away.

HOME FROM HOSPITAL.

THEY bore my fever-stricken girl away,
But let me briefly sit the cot beside
Where, reft of golden ringlets, brilliant-eyed,
In fierce delirium's restlessness she lay.

"Better," they wrote ; "the child may quit us soon."
Anon, the message "Haste, a sudden chill
Has sapped her strength, and thwarts our utmost skill"
Came as a thunder-burst mid brightening noon.

Again I drew my darling's nook anigh,
Stroked her thin fingers, kissed a wasted cheek.
She knew me, smiled, and framed her lips to speak :
"Mother," she slowly whispered, "do not cry ;

"Dry your eyes, mother : I shall soon be home."
Then, as the shimmering west at close of day,
The lit face wanned, while passed her soul away,
Leaving me lornest 'neath the heavens' great dome.

A SIGH FROM THE SEA.*

To 'scape his rock-rent ship the seaman sought,
Ere it should plunge beneath the towering spray :
"Oh! save me," sobbed a little maid bestraught,
"I do not want to die yet ; help me, pray !"

Sweet innocent, not many summers old !
I would have given my all to grant thy plea,—
Safe in my arms thy shuddering form to hold,
Reft from the ravening, chill, remorseless sea.

In anguish utteredst thou the simple phrase
That still is found the heart's most instant cry,
Though fled be youth and laughter-haunted days :—
"Not yet, O Death ! We do not want to die."

We fain would live, if only that we long
To gaze on noontide's glow through leaves of Spring ;
To hear at drowsy dawn the thrush's song ;
To bask where summer flowers their odours fling ;

* At the wreck of the *Mohegan*, 14th October 1898, a little girl begged the chief officer most piteously to save her, as she 'did not want to die yet.'

To walk where dew-drops, couched in orient gold,
Make rich as jewelled lace the spinner's ply,
Or watch on wintry eves the white-cheeked wold,
A-blush at wistful sunbeams' fond good-bye.

Not hence would we be called, for whom remain
The hand outstretched and welcome warm of friends,
Whose love, be every other solace slain,
Can lighten all the sorrows Fortune sends.

Lone, sea-rocked child, whom never more caress
Or fondest tones can wake to wonted mirth,
If Death could sell his spoils for man's distress,
Our tears had richly bought thee back to earth!

Yet, if thy spirit now may look upon
This land where few have weal, though many yearn,—
Where skies forget that late the sun hath shone,
Methinks thou say'st, "I would not now return."

A TALE OF OXFORD.

ESCAPED from thankless toil the morning through,
The college-lecturer sought the sunny street,
But neither glanced aloft at welkin blue,
Nor noted aught around. His hurrying feet
Straight led him on to where his Lady true,
Come cloud or shine, her Love would surely meet.

She, keeping tryst, his newly married bride,
Was pressing forward now, with gaze intent
On him alone ; as when at turn of tide
Some bark pursues its course with canvas bent,
Till sheltering longed-for land is close espied,
Where, safe from storms, can careless hours be spent.

But one short morning severed, yet how swift
She makes her steps to meet him, nigh at last !
See, now she halts, two pretty hands to lift
To enring his sleeve, and lo! her treasure fast,
The while across her face sweet passions drift,
And, chiefest, love, the bloom of yearnings past.

A tale, meseemed, her looks transfigured told
Of hope-starred separation's vigils ceased
At rich contentment's cloudless dawn of gold ;—
Of woman perfected,—from bonds released
Her peer and pride unvexed to have and hold,
And thenceforth life one bounteous marriage-feast.

Long bliss in union—type of heaven to man—
Their portion sure, my eye-fed fancy painted,
Nor dreamt that, ere a year should reach its span,
One, desolate, must mourn his sweetheart sainted,—
Must cease, with soul entranced, her smile to scan,—
A scholar taught of God, with grief acquainted.

THE SIESTA.

(Suggested by a Woodcut.)

WORN with the city's sultry glare,
I close mine eyes for rest,
And straight my thoughts untrammelled fare
To scenes ay loved the best :—

My childhood's home mid mantling trees ;
The churchyard's lichened tower ;
The dial's disk, with dim degrees
That erst could tell the hour ;

Stones carved in charactery quaint
For myriad mourners dead ;
Like love unmarred by mortal taint,
The undying greensward spread.

I see the far fells' billowy blue ;
The common's golden light ;
The road where spreading chestnuts strew
Their petals pink and white ;

The streamlet, brown from mossy fen,
That fern-swept, flower-kissed falls ;
The ducklings 'scaped from foster-hen,
A fleet of fluffy balls ;

The daisied lawn 'twas crime to mow ;
The swallows' fitful flight ;
The blackbirds hastening to and fro
To feed their young ere night.

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Little I reck the city's roar,
Reheard as visions wane,
For Memory's potent spell is o'er
My spirit, young again.

A LATE NOVEMBER DAWN.

BARED are the shaken woods by wind and sleet,
And drenched the plains ;
Except for hips and haws and bitter-sweet,
Loom dull the lanes.

But swirling blasts this morn have ceased awhile
Rough war to wage ;
Earth's woe for Autumn shent, the sunlight's smile
Seems to assuage.

A blackbird trills, as though the Spring were come,
His sweetest air,
Nor recks that horrid frost his life may numb
With Gorgon stare.

O happy bird, who, now that heaven is kind,
Content canst sing,
Nor fear'st that Destiny, crude, stumbling, blind,
Dark days may bring ;

But fondly deem'st that blessings free from dole
Will glad thine eyes
Till bliss unutterable thrill thy soul
'Neath summer skies !

LITTLE THINGS.

WHO with Love a-maying goes
Joy's brightest blossom knows,
And the nooks where, ever sweet,
It lurks for lingering feet.
O ye souls that loveless live
In what your labours give,
Have ye never marked how sing
The mating birds in spring,
How they, merry, cease to moil,
Too glad for constant toil?
'Tis the flowerets here and there
Make summer meads most fair ;
When its tiny pebbles gleam,
Grows gay the sombre stream.
Just a kiss,—the softened tone
Of words for one alone,—
Merest glance from gladdened eye,—
A love-beladen sigh,—
Slightest touch of slender hand
Will change this pilgrim-land,
Yea, this desert parched with care,
To realms of comfort rare :
Love's all-glorious weft, I ween,
Gives the robe of life its sheen.

DAY AND NIGHT.

TRICKING in splendour long coast-lines dim,
Sallies the sun o'er the eastern main ;
Jealous clouds, crept from the water's rim,
Cripple the wheels of his crimson wain :
Thus oft are life's promises bright and brief,
And its fairest scenes blurred by the mists of grief.

Smilingly wakens the winsome Dawn,
Rosy as Innocence ripe for play,
Broid'ring on gossamer, white as lawn,
Jewels Night's fingers have wrought for Day :
We guess not, beholding her bravery sweet,
Glad-eyed Day may a heavy-browed gloaming greet.

Drear though the deep be as daylight dies,
Luridly lit by the lightning's gleam,
Black with their burden though storm-clouds rise,
Strangling the cynosure's trembling beam,
Oh ! yet may the helmsman direct my bark
To the land of my longing beyond the dark.

THEN AND AFTER.

I WANDERED alone where the nightingale's song
Told of love still enduring mid sorrows and wrong,
Where the gentle wind, crooning the woodlands among,
To the slow-swaying sedges a lullaby sung ;
And the rhythmical swing of the somnolent main
Came swelling and sinking, from over the plain,
With the voices of distant meandering streams,
Which the rising moon flecked with her silvery beams.
Then I longed in mellifluous numbers to write
Of the magical charm of the soft summer night,—
To record, with some whispering reed for a pen,
Its many-tongued speech for the joyaunce of men.
But alas ! when my labour of love I essayed,
My soul had been left in sad Philomel's glade.

LOVE.

LOVE is the gift of sight.
They on whom dawns its light
Learn what hath been their night :
 Above—around, ill shapes of darkness flee.

It is a sun to warm
The iceberg's shaggy form—
The prey of every storm,
 And solve it in the wonder-working sea.

Love, like the coral isle,
Mid tempests still can smile,
And greater wax the while,
 Its firm foundations in the depths unknown.

'Tis seed with virtue fraught
The bird of Peace hath brought,
That grows unasked, untaught,
 And clothes with living green the barren stone.

Love is the mountain-height,
Most bathed in heavenly light,
From which to view aright
 The lower things around, seen thence but small.

Love calms the bosom's strife
When doubts and fears are rife ;
Love is the pulse of life ;
 Love is our very breath,—our all in all.

DEBATING.

ANON he felt her hand
With tightened grasp,
But tremulous, his fingers clasp ;
And oft she turned and scanned
His face, and looked again aside.—
Ah ! could she be his bride ?

Night, while they wandered on,
Her veil had spread
Their path about ; and overhead
A star resplendent shone :
“ Would’st thou thus calmly shine,” said he,
“ Alone, forgetting me ? ”

“ Ere life thy presence knew,
Young Hope had lain
As lies some buried, cheerless grain
Unblessed of shower or dew :
Now, as unwatered dies the blade,
Hope reft of thee, must fade.”

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The wind has ceased to sigh;

A quivering star

Shines with another from afar ;

Undimmed the meadows lie.

Moist-eyed she speaks, with placid brow :--

“ I know I love thee now.”

FOR HER LETTER.

WHILE some on modish trifles rant,
Or on their vaunted worth descant,—
 While some write coldly, lacking ease,
 What soon the tenderest thoughts would freeze,
Thy missives speak the loving heart,
And newer love to all impart.
 Yea, dearest, none, do I avow,
 Could write more welcomely than thou.
As glad at heart I grew to see
The letter fond thou sentest me
 As one becalmed who, homesick, hails
 The breeze that swells his flaccid sails.
Not more the wakening birds rejoice
When Dawn declares with gentle voice
 That niggard Night misrules no more,
 And Day outspreads his golden store.
Each line some tender thought awakes,—
On Memory's lyre sweet music makes.
 Thy words like oars at night-time seem
 Which set the ocean-path agleam,
Rousing with every rhythmic plash
Many a rich, responsive flash ;
 And Recollection's murky main,
 With fire unwonted glints again.

Entranced I read thy words, and trace
The lineaments of thy dear face :—
 The rippled brow to musing lent,
 Then smoothing o'er on mirth intent ;—
Eyes that could never wanton roll—
Windows whence looks the lucent soul,
 Oped, with sunny gladness glowing,
 Latticed, pity's moonbeams throwing.
Thy little hand, kissed oft by me,
Busied in kindly acts I see,
 Or marshalling in rank and file
 The words that throng the teeming style,
Ready to take by dear surprise
The citadel where true love lies.
 Thy locks I look upon, unbound,
 An amber shrine thy breast around,
Lapping in wavy folds thy head,
Like wheat-fields moved by south winds' tread.
 I hear thy voice, a rippling rill,
 Clear-coursing thirsty souls to fill,
Meandering onward merrily,
Fresh'ning the fields of phantasy.
 Charmed, thy witching page I read,
 Lost in lands of life and deed ;—
Far in realms ethereal stray
Wheresoe'er thou wing'st the way.
 Yet not in words alone I find
 The power that captive leads the mind :
The soul that gives thy missives breath
Seals me thy servitor till death.

SISTER FANNY.

(October 5, 1850—October 26, 1889.)

THE autumn gold is gone from hedge and tree ;
Long-ling'ring night-frosts veil the misty lea ;
Harsh Winter's reign begins. Oh ! where is she
Whose smile made Summer all the year to me ?

The woods, to which the sougning winds complain,
Will hear anon the nightingale's refrain :
To me, alas ! no Spring can grant again
The voice whose music eased my heart of pain.

As stainless rills whence sunbeams borrow light,
As fleckless skies that follow murky night,
As dew-kissed stars of jasmin gleaming white,
Seemed ay my Sweet in innocency dight.

My flower fresh-opened drooped ; but this I know :—
Her times He set Who bids the bindweed blow,
Who limns on lifting haze His beauteous bow,
And gives to gathering gloom the sunset's glow.

Death's surges pitiless struck down as prey
The pleasant cliff that smiled above their spray :
The soul that nestled there hath winged her way
To shores where shocks of tempest ne'er affray.

A LAY OF LOVE.

PHYLLIS wrought, where beamed the sun,
Golden threads her locks made dun,
Singing, half in girlish fun,
“ Long I, damsel lone, have spun :
Love ne’er ventures nigh to me.

“ But if Love, rash, raiding Hun,
Having forceful victory won,
Wasting, swift my heart o’er-run,
Then his smouldering conquest shun,
All my life must hateful be.”

Ere the blushing lass could flee,
Stole a youth along the lea,
Lithe of limb and bright of ee,
Spake :—“ More fair than Graces three,
Nymph adored, surpassed of none,

“ Hear thou graciously my plea :
Love as tyrant cease to see ;
Captive, lo ! he comes to thee.
Him as thrall to hold agree,
Then is bidding bliss begun.”

COLUMBA MEA.

UNDIMMED are still the stars she loved when here,
 Unchanged the happy throstle's notes of spring ;
 Yet stars, sweet music,—every lovely thing,
Of her, our lost one, telling, wakes a tear.
Oft, as I muse, her eyes of love appear ;
 The face is close that sunlight seemed to bring ;
 And then, alas ! my joy has taken wing :
Lone must I live ; for she to God is near !

Ah me ! the dove has flown from out my ark.
 I dreamed her mine for ever, not my guest,
 Who may not come and end my piteous pain.
Dim is the water's waste, the night-cloud dark ;
 But, drifting slow, I near the shore of rest
 Whose brightening dawn shall grant my Sweet again.

TO DORIS,

ON RECEIVING HER PORTRAIT.

WHEN deepening snowdrifts long have held the plain,
 'Neath storm-clouds blotting out the blue on high,
 The truant sun with rapture we espy
Flouting the frost, our bashful violets' bane.
Barren and wintry mourned my heart's domain—
 No bud of bliss rebuked its lowering sky—
 Till Doris, sweet as winsome Spring, drew nigh,
And, scattering gloom, let gladness flower again.

Oft have I since—delight undimmed by years—
 On Memory's pictured legend joyed to dwell
 Where, marking all amorn a wight forlorn,
Doris with sovran balms his spirit cheers ;
 Now, through this sweet presentment's artless spell,
 Dim-visioned Memory's halting skill I scorn.

ON AN ARMLESS VENUS.

CAPITOL, ROME.

THERE lived a budding damsel long ago,
Lissom and blithe as swallow fain at eve,
Unskilled in words or wiles which trust deceive—
Kindness her comrade, jealousy her foe.
One who, enraptured, fondly watched her grow
So fair that gazing gods for sure must grieve
Her presence pure this world should some day leave
In marble wrought her beauty's fleeting snow.

Thus nations, when long time her haunts had ceased
Her voice to echo, still the maid adored,
Till impious hands their sculptured bliss o'erthrew.
O lovely marble, scathed by human beast,
Thou mindest me how oft hath Lust abhorred
Compelled once flawless souls his rage to rue.

LIEDER OHNE WORTE.

I PLAYED the songs she loved in by-gone years,
With teachings fraught past skill of human tongue,
And truths that angels long to earth have sung
Of hope mid conflicts, love out-casting fears.
Anon, as measures sweet entranced mine ears,
This thought with arrowy flight my bosom wrung :—
“Who played them erst now sleeps the dead among ;”
And poignant sorrow blurred my sight with tears.

Meseemed it then my comely world had grown
As dark as bosky wilds where, mute, the birds
Bemourn their mates concealed by starless night,
Till thus my heart reproved me :—“Not her own,
But God's she held her life, nor sought with words
Of self to make its melody more bright.”

ON READING A BOOK OF POEMS.

As one who tired of work, yet loath to play,
 Ensconced beside some fish-frequented strand
 Seeks usury of leisure, rod in hand,
I set myself to read a book, one day.
There much, it seemed, the author sought to say,
 Yet every noble sentiment she planned—
 A wisp of words in loosely woven band—
At touch of Reason's finger fell away.

Doubtless the smaller fry are passing sweet
 To them that love such weightless spoil to hook ;
 Good loaves the gleaner's search may gain at length ;
But ye that crave true poesy's nutrient meat,
 The soul to satisfy, forswear this book,
 And seek in other fields your source of strength.

TO A SLAIN CAT

IN LIME STREET, CITY.

MEEK puss, that stopp'st the gutter, stiffening, cold,
Of none now heeded, spattered o'er with mire,
Mute as thy stony bed, the mellow fire
Faded from out thy glazing eyes of gold,—
Thou, whom rapt cosseters, could truth be told,
Hugged with a zeal beyond thy heart's desire,
Hast early proved the latent wreckful ire
Of human amity whose depths have shoaled.

Man, kind to kin, who nutureth the knave,
And spareth e'en for murderers doomed a sigh,
Begrudged thee, decalogueless thing, thy breath.
But happier thou, doomed to a dust-heap grave,
Than they that glare on love's old well-heads dry,
And, mad-athirst, gasp for the stream of death.

TO A SPIDER.

OF all the puzzling things designed by Fate
Thy being looks the loathliest, solemn wight !
Yet, having scaled secure my ceiling's height,
Perchance thou thoroughly scornest man's estate.
On self-spun cords thou hang'st thy centred weight,
Lone wretch decreed from birth an anchorite,—
Thou emperor rich in undisputed might,
But houseless cold curmudgeon, lacking mate.

I cannot count thee happy, though thy will
No living being thwarts, and though thy prey
Unsought and plentiful by none is shared.
Who would subserve his ends by sitting still,
Or weaving toils for fools 'tis nought to slay,
While Atë, swinked, destruction's besom spared ?

FRIDA ASLEEP.

SMILING she slept. As oft at close of day
The sparkling sun-kissed sea grows strangely still—
Gliding unmarked its moon-lit caves to fill,
For dreams our drowsy darling left her play.
Caught in her angel's kindly arms away,
Her soul, refreshed by some Elysian rill,
Now frees itself from motes of earth-born ill,
While here, to watch her slumbers, seraphs stay.

Those loving eyes, which jealous lashes veil,
Have shown her little yet of earthly lore ;
The tiny hand which there half-folded rests
Looks e'en as budding vineyard-tendrils frail :
Ah ! slight as summer clouds she seems ; but more
Her word might sway our hearts than king s' behests.

ON A CAGED SONG-THRUSH.

SWEET bird, whose notes have charmed my careless ear
And borne my weary spirit unawares
To sunny realms unreached by earthly cares,
What joys are thine captivity to cheer?
No waving woods thou see'st, to memory dear;
For glebe a sod of grass thy owner spares;
Thy only pool a scant-filled measure bears;
To stay thy flight, close-serried bars are near.

Yet mar no private griefs thy perfect song—
Tribute too rich for churls who love pretend,
But lightly took thy liberty away.
Thus souls whose life is Art reck little wrong,—
Count even despots kind that her befriend,
And work with God, full happy every day.

AT EVENTIDE.

'Tis hush, for Night has left her eastern fane,
And treads in progress royal the stilly air ;
Lone Hesperus illumes her forehead fair,
And myriad broidering stars her dusky train.
Spent with the track the shepherd sun hath ta'en,
The shadows unto Twilight's fold repair,
To sleep till Cynthia quit her cloistered lair,
Soothing her hapless Philomela's pain.

Dear mistress Night, from every mossy dell
With purer incense languished petals pray
To thee whose breath can strength anew impart.
I also suppliant yearn to own thy spell ;
Then, far out-dazzling wan-winged thoughts of day,
Will Fancy's fireflies through my spirit dart.

BALLADE OF DEATH.

SLEEPLESS wretch with eyeballs bleary,
Playing unmoved thy ceaseless chess,
Shifting human pieces teary
O'er a field where griefs oppress,
Ne'er to cunning Time's address
Vantage will thy craft allow,—
Nought may e'er thy bonds transgress :
Death, in sooth what meanest thou ?

Tedious, hold'st thou not, and dreary
Schemes whose end admits no guess ?
Weaving ay, with glances peery,
Warp and woof of man's distress ?
Canst thou not from hectoring cess,
Thou 'fore whom the haughtiest bow ?
Ruth ne'er rendered kingship less :
Death, in sooth what meanest thou ?

Chill thy presence, gruesome, eerie,
E'en would anchorite confess ;
Scarce will outcasts, anguish-weary,
Grant thy stony touch could bless.
Poisoning the feaster's mess,
Rifling rude the laurelled brow,
Tarnishing the glossiest tress,
Death, in sooth what meanest thou ?

ENVOI.

When, as hawk with loosened jess,
Quits my soul what binds it now,
Sure 'twill learn, with thankfulness,
Death, in sooth what meanest thou .

TO PHYLLIS.

(TRIOLETS.)

NOTHING I knew, till thou cam'st near,
Of tremor save from cold or dread :
Of one than life itself more dear
Nothing I knew till thou cam'st near.
Though now, when once thy voice I hear,
Thrills me some spell from foot to head,
Nothing I knew till thou cam'st near,
Of tremor save from cold or dread.

Before mine eyes encountered thine,
And strength from out those sources drew,
How dim my ken ! The world's design,
Before mine eyes encountered thine,
My sluggish sense could ne'er divine :
I had not dreamed of violets blue
Before mine eyes encountered thine,
And strength from out those sources drew.

THE RIDE.

“BRING hither,” the baron infuriate cries,
“My horse and yon lance furbished keen :
The lover who ventured my will to despise,
Though my daughter should dub him the light of her eyes,
Soon sleeps in the kirkyaird, I ween.

“That wolf in my pastures I promise short shrift
Ere hies he with Pluto to stay ;
But haste ye, my henchmen, their horses are swift,
And they fly as the flakes which the winter winds drift,
While lose we the moments of day.

“Though distant that upstart by many a rod,
My vengeance shall mete him his worth ;
Who smiles now erect, swift shall gasp on the sod :”
Thus he spake, and his steed on a mole’s burrow trod,
And crushed him, sore-smitten, to earth.

“Quick send me a priest,” moaned the baron in pain,
“My soul for its flight to prepare ;
The light of my eyes afore sunset will wane :
Prithee, tell ye my truants, fond heaven-married twain,
For them is their father’s last prayer.”

PRÆTERITA.

Lo, a woman in grey, with scant grizzled locks,
Whom I asked, "Why sit you thinking,
Not heeding the most of your task unwrought,
While the glorious sun is sinking?"

Quoth she, "I remember a day like this,
When the summer's breath was sighing ;—
The amber-hued beams of the sun's broad disk
Were a lane's lush foliage dyeing."

"But why did you suddenly turn aside
As you limned that eve long vanished ;
And wherefore so soon from your cloud-swept face
Has the struggling smile been banished?"

She said, "There came back to me words I spake
In the twilight dim and fleeting,—
Old promises, vows—and I meant them all—
Mid my heart's tumultuous beating.

“ And I thought that my pulses are slower now,
And my favours few for granting :
There’s no one to meet me when work is done,
And the western light falls slanting.”

“ But surely it matters not still, good dame,
That, in life’s fond hey-day sporting,
You strolled in an alley,—said gracious things,
As will maids to lads a-courting.

“ And why as you picture the faded past
Should your eye be overbrimming ?
To each comes a season when youth must cease—
Yea, a time of hope’s bedimming.”

“ Sir, believe me, I care not a jot that youth
With its gifts has no returning ;
Nor is it my maidenhood’s passioned love
That my memory seared is burning ;

“ But I fiercely am grieved that I e’er had birth,
Or of life, when born, gave token,
At thoughts of an honest man’s love misprized,—
Of my pledge to a pure soul broken.”

DREAMS.

IN dreams by night meseemed lay dead
My heart's delight of former days :
Dark cypress bound the shapely head
Whose rippling locks I loved to praise.

The large and liquid eyes were there,
But swart as stilly sedge-lined pool
When in the hazy twilight air
The sunset's smouldering embers cool.

Her cheeks, which erst, as mountain-tips
That clambering morn just touches, shone,
Kissed of Death's envious ashen lips,
Looked, as late-lingering snowdrops, wan.

The lissom form my arms had wreathed,
The voice with laughter wont to trill,
The mouth that murmurous music breathed
Were now in wakeless slumber still.

Might ne'er again her accents, sweet
As wood-notes after vernal showers,
The welcome lovingly repeat
That recompensed for weary hours.

I mused on how, my labours done,
At eve beside the purling beck
We sat, and—token we were one—
Looped her long hair about my neck.

“ Their tinselled robes,” she said, “ the trees
Will doff at wayward Winter's will ;
This brook to barbarous ice may freeze ;
But nought our love can change or chill.”

That hour returned when, anguish-wrung,
We learned our ways awhile must part :
A moment round my neck she clung,
Then clasped me close with throbbing heart.

The sickening wrench of severance came ;
Anew I felt the last long kiss,
And questioned—all my soul aflame—
“ Could heaven-born love be more than this?”

I woke, and knew mine eyelids wet,
And thought, “ Ah me, now little cares
My Lady—queen in visions yet—
That mine is not the name she bears !”

SEVERANCE.

DEAR madcap Madge's merry mood was stilled :
Sighing she glanced at ocean's boundless plain,
Then sobbed,—for lively grief her bosom filled—
“ Father, good-bye ; when shall you come again ? ”

Bending, the father kissed his sun-burnt fay,
Adown whose cheeks big tears had made their track ;
“ Ere long,” he said, “ my ship from leagues away,
Helped by kind winds, will bring me safely back.”

Thereafter oft she sought the barren beach,—
A huge-limbed dog, her sole companion, near,
And oft, to comfort self, to him would preach :—
“ Have patience ; father's coming, Bruno dear.”

At last she saw what seemed the yearned-for ship,
And, winged with love, beyond the sea-marge flew :
But how she then escaped the surf's strong grip
None but the watchful Bruno ever knew.

* * * *

Aforetime, heavenly Father, many a day
Did I not feel Thy smile, yea, touch Thine hand?
And now, ill-satisfied, behold I stray,
From Thee remote, on life's distressful strand.

Draw to me nigh. My cares and doubts a sea
Of whelming waves that sunder us are grown.
Grant me, a solaced child, to walk with Thee,—
Nearer to know Thee than Thou once wast known.

NIGHT.

BID me not sleep ; for though the shadows fall,
Slow swathing earth in one Cimmerian pall,
The glimmering hosts aloft now greet mine eye,
Their sheen more fair as this world's glories die.

Our earth—in all the heavens the only sphere
To daylight-loving human emmets dear—
To Night's true votaries is but an ace
Upon the measureless expanse of space,—
A little stone, 'mongst purer jewels set,
Upon the lift's cerulean carcanet.

Begone, dull Sleep ! too long the noisy prate
Of men hath moved my soul to mourn the fate
That forces me to learn, the livelong day,
How meanest things possess the sons of clay.
Mute stars, most eloquent, your marvellous tale
Must needs o'er slumber's subtlest spell prevail.

LAST WORDS.

FAREWELL, dear heart ! A few short moments now,
And swift thy light-plumed bark must skim the sea.
Love waits on her ; Hope flutters 'fore her prow :
Kind angels, sure, will guard my love for me.

Nought upon earth can lighten now our care,
Or solace yield till thou be come again.
Loved one, when evening stillness calls to prayer,
Behold the stars beyond this world of pain.

WHAT SHE SAID.

A DOZEN kisses ask I not,
As though I lacked no more ;
I merely say "a kiss" : I know
That one must bring a score.

I do not tell my dearest one
To follow me about ;
For well I know his little pet
He cannot live without.

Nor beg I him to think on me ;
For, whatsoe'er I say,
I feel his soul is knit with mine,
As sunny beams with day.

This only whisper I his ear—
And ah ! I know it true :—
"When thou, my sunshine, perishest,
Lo ! I must perish too."

A SONG OF WINTER.

THOUGH often I've said it,
And written it too to you,
I fain must repeat it :—
My Dearest, I'm true to you.

Our waiting has long been
Since sadly we parted ;
But, though so much severed,
We still are whole-hearted.

Reflect on the swallows :
They come with the leaves, Dear ;
Now, I am your swallow,
And you are my eaves, Dear.

Buds soon will be bursting,
And Winter be banished :
Ah ! bright will our Spring be,
Our cause of grief vanished.

Though not like a dove
Can I sit near and coo to you,
In presence or absence
My heart will be true to you.

A REPLY.

You ask me why I love.—I cannot tell.
God only knows, Who orders all things well.
I cannot show the reason earth and sea
Are beautiful ;—such power is not in me ;
Nor seek I proof why life is linked with grace,—
Why loveliness in Nature's all I trace.
This only know I,—'tis enough to weet :—
God planted love, He bids us taste and eat.

GLAD TEARS.

THOUGH Hetty was happy,
She could not but cry :
Each joy at her heart
Brought a tear to her eye.

Oft thus is the rose-bud
Right gladsome to view,
Whose beautiful petals
Are weeping with dew.

“Why, Hetty, those tear-drops?—
What irks you to-day?”
“I don’t know, dear mother ;
I scarcely can say.”

“Then why should you weep thus?”
The mother enquired.
“You had better lie down, Dear ;
You surely are tired.”

“No, no,” said she, lifting
Her large eyes of blue ;—
“But John says he loves me,
And I love him too.”

REAL SINGLE BLESSEDNESS.

OH, happy she unmarried, who would fain
So fare through life, unless that one she gain
In whom her heart's great love can centred be,
Whose fellowship would make her more than free!
Blest is the maid whose soul is not as steel,
Who would not scorn the bonds of love to feel ;—
Who, single, grants true comradeship would give
The purest pleasures, yet with joy can live,
Nor cares to cast her noblest gift away.
This well she guards ; but should there come the day
To love and be beloved, the joyous wife
Will live with her elect a doubled life.

LOVE'S LANGUAGE.

My Love is fair and bright
As mirrored moon at night ;
Or if, beneath a cloud,
Her grace she seem to shroud,
And shine with minished light,
The cloud it is, not she,
~~Hideth~~ ~ her grace from me.
Still, still, she shineth clear :
Her waywardness is dear ;
Her wrongfulness is right.

WAITING IN WINTER.

WHEN nought is seen but ice and snow,
My thoughts to greening forests go ;
Before imagination's eyes
A thousand sun-waked flowers arise.

The snows are kind, the frosts do well,
Till Spring with magic breaks their spell ;
The powers of winter work for good
In barren field and leafless wood.
But oft, with wintry care opprest,
Though Wisdom cries, " To wait is best,"
I yearn to greet the Spring of life—
To call my only Love " my wife."

TO ONE DISTANT.

My darling, life no light hath had,
 Reft of thy love's sweet rays ;
Though still my dreams thy voice makes glad,
 The dawn its witchery stays,
Leaving my wildered spirit sad
 In unenchanted ways.

Our flower-grown haunts seem strange and bare,
 For thou hast left my side :
No counter-charm 'gainst grimly care
 Will teeming earth provide,—
To me no summer's gift is fair,
 If far be thou, my bride.

For lovers severed, cruel Time
 Creeps as with crippled wings
From cheerless morn till curfew's chime ;—
 Calm eve no solace brings,
Save when Hope's star 'bove clouds can climb,
 Or Faith her wood-notes sings.

ON FINDING PHŒBE GONE.

O'ERWHELMED with sleep the shepherd lay,
Nor once, mid dreams, discerned
How, overhead, the starry way
With brilliant meteors burned.

He clomb the hill at dawn, the east
To view in glory bathed ;
But vapours thick, by night released,
The whole horizon swathed.

For flowers to greet his Dear he searched
His trim parterres in vain ;
The loveliest blossoms lay besmirched
And rent by wind and rain.

He led his dewy flocks to fold
While day was waxing wan,
Then, coming nigh his cot, was told
His Love an hour had gone.

Said he, " A million meteors' light,—
Morn's mellowest rays to miss,—
The death of leagues of roses bright
Were not a loss like this ! "

MARYLAND.

FRIENDS may forsake me,
Age overtake me,
But life will be happy
While Mary is mine !

Grief never nears me ;
Always she cheers me ;
I cannot be mournful,
If Mary is mine !

Burdens she lightens ;
Darkness she brightens ;
Her love gives life's story
A beauty divine.

Lonely I wandered,
Sadly I pondered,
Till she in life's desert
Declared " I am thine."

QUÆ SCRIPSI.

Mary has brought me—
Mary has taught me
Where rivers of gladness
Meander and shine.

Shall I not love her?
None is above her ;—
Nought breathes can compare with
The Mary that's mine.

PAST AND PERFECT.

BRIGHT eyes were Mary's,—
Lovely, bewitching,
Stealing one's peace
While the memory enriching.

Quick eyes had Mary,
Save when they, wandering,
Met with mine wistful,
And set us a-pondering.

Soft eyes had Mary,—
Gentle and tender :
They first gave hope
I was not an offender.

Bright eyes has Mary,—
Stars much excelling,
Lovelier than ever
For love in them dwelling.

EHEU !

A vision she one short-lived afternoon,
Diffusing holy calm and bliss supreme.
Alack ! that loveliness should fleet so soon,
Whose present spell made all the past a dream.

Thus rests the passage-bird upon its way,—
Thrills with unwonted joy the seamen's hearts,
Then—fairest thing above the briny spray—
Outspreads its perfect pinions and departs.

THE RISING STORM.

THE wind has caught the flowing tide ;
The gulls have fled the sea ;
Black scudding clouds speed far and wide ;
Oh ! what will evening be ?

As drunk with spray, each gust more shrill
Athwart the salloos screams ;
The water's breast, at morning still,
Now heaves with troublous dreams.

The crested billows whiter loom
Against yon sandy reach,
And louder ever comes the boom
Of breakers on the beach ;

Slowly ~~some~~ homebound ship afar
Is beating up the bay ;
Grant God she cross the haven-bar
Before the close of day !

THE RAIN.

WHEN will there be an ending
Of the rain ?
The sodden flowers are bending,
Their sweets for nothing spending ;
But still the skies are sending
Down the rain !

The naughty snails are joying
In the rain :
What bloom are they destroying,
Their greedy palates cloying,
Our tender growths annoying,
In the rain !

Fond parent-birds are fretting
In the rain :
The thickest trees are letting
Drops trickle through, and wetting
Dear chicks, who cold are getting
In the rain.

The butterflies are hiding
 From the rain,
To shelt'ring buds confiding
The woes there are betiding
The over-much abiding
 Of the rain.

For Rhoda, too, a tether
 Is the rain.
How dare she trust the weather?
The stoutest shoon of leather
Would hardly hold together
 In such rain!

Perhaps the sun will scatter
 Soon the rain ;—
The storm no more will batter,
Or shrubs and rose-leaves tatter ;
The birds again will chatter :
What's past will little matter,
If Rhoda's footsteps patter
 'Stead of rain !

A SEA-NYMPH'S SONG.

IN former days,
Where memory strays,
 I loved a little fellow.
Oft, joining hands,
We scoured the sands
 Of sunlit Portobello.

His voice was dear,
Its accents clear
 As aught from maestro's 'cello,
And loveliest seemed
When twilight dreamed
 O'er wave-lapped Portobello.

As swift years fled,
He boldly said
 What here I need not tell o' ;—
Words doubtless trite
To any wight
 But us in Portobello.

No more we ran :
Grown maid and man
 We paced the sea-marge yellow.
No arm was found
My waist around
 Save his in Portobello.

Now far is he
Who lives for me,
 And kens, no mad Othello,
My constant mind
Could never find
 His match in Portobello.

For this I yearn—
The safe return
 Of one I love right well. O
Remind him, waves,
For him how craves
 A lass in Portobello.

MY SWEETHEART.

"*Browne is my Loue, but gracefull.*"—

NICOLAS YONGE, *Musica Transalpina*, Bk. II., 1597.

"*For a soft brown bosom is beating nigh.*"—

J. J. BRITTON, *A Sheaf of Ballads*, p. 160.

My Love has a bosom both soft and brown,
And right faultless lips and nose,
While her skin will compare with the thistle's down :
Such a damsel would soon be the talk of the town,
Did she wish as a belle to pose.

Her touch is as light as the snowflake's fall
In a hill-locked windless land ;
And so silently treads she my marble hall,
One might deem her an elf at a grasshopper's ball,
Or a mew on the fresh-laved strand.

My Dear with no fillet adorns her front,
Nor with zone confines her waist,
But the simplest of necklets to wear is wont.
Light as Artemis, longs she to lead in the hunt
For the little deer nimble-paced.

My Love has large dreamy, though changeful eyes ;
And her voice—words fail for that.
When by Destiny's sleuth-hounds she certes dies,
Many folk will feel sad ;—not a few may heave sighs
For the loss of my tabby cat.

A COMPLAINT.

O CUPID, romping, ruthless boy,
When will you once be man?
The while you butterflies destroy,
You quite forget my Nan.

You love to strike some brainless thing,—
Some proudly mincing jade,
And leave her wounded, languishing,
Past all but Hymen's aid.

You search for prey the mountain side,—
The crowded urban road,—
King s'courts, if human hearts there hide,
But not my Nan's abode.

To wing young chits of various grades,
You practice every plan ;—
Transfix the homeliest nursery-maids,
But always miss my Nan.

Grant to your weary finger rest ;
Let mine but pull your string ;—
Your barb shall strike the noblest breast
That ever felt its sting.

OLD FRIENDSHIP.

OLD friendship, not unlike the frog,
Transformed as dry or dank the day,
Looks one time listless as a log,
Another, leaps along its way.

Or trulier like those buds it seems
Which bear at heart the perfect flower,
Unfolding swift their winter dreams
If present sunlight wake their power.

Though fondest souls must often sail
For long apart Time's ocean o'er,
Their love, fair freight in vessels frail,
Shall live when treacherous Time's no more.

A PALÆONTOLOGICAL EPISODE.

“Trilobites all occur on their backs in some formations.”

THE sun with sweltering heat all day
Shone on an old Silurian bay.
Said Jove, “Come, Neptune, lend a hand ;
Our skiff is leagues from yonder land,
And long beneath this sun half-boiled,
My new-shipped ale will quite be spoiled :
Of course, with my accustomed luck,
The anchor in a reef has stuck.”
“Aye, aye,” quoth Neptune, “Heave ahoy!—
Well done! Ah! now we’re off, my boy.”
Soon with the breeze the shore they reach ;
By eve the well-filled casks they beach,
Ranging them ready to be borne
To caverns near at early morn.
Said Neptune, “Jove, you’re half asleep :
You trust to me good watch to keep.
See here, while yet the eve was young,
Your hammock ’twixt two casks I swung.”
But, soon as the resounding shore
Proclaimed that even gods can snore,

A-tip-toe Neptune stole abaft,
Removed a bung and took a draught.
Unchecked by winking stars or moon,
Another brand he sampled soon ;
A third, a fourth were swift attacked ;
The last alone his ardour slacked ;
But never once it crossed his brain
To make the spigots fast again.—
As Triton told a trusty mate,
For hours a river seemed in spate,
And, long ere Jove awoke from sleep,
More beer than brine composed the deep.

The mermaids left their sandy bars,
Their pleasant caves and rocky scars,
And, instant with the ill to cope,
Proclaimed themselves a Band of Hope.
Corals and molluscs cried aghast,
“A cataclysm’s come at last,”
And, squirming, their quietus took,
As shown in specimen and book.

Full many a trilobite in shale,
Succumbed to Jove’s imperial ale :
Feebly at first reduced to toddle,
He next from side to side would waddle,
Then, as the flood o’erwhelmed his track,
Sank helplessly upon his back ;
With branchiæ upturned he lay,
His eyes obscured by marly clay.—
His friends were all in like condition,
So witnessed none his deposition.

FOSSIL IMPRESSIONS IN OXFORD CLAY.

IN lecture-room, ah, long ago !

What Phillips said seemed trite, though true,
▲ And, fronting him, there beamed a row
Of school-girls, entered two by two,—
Stars that still shine dim memory through.

While the professor's skilful hand
Sketched the quaint charms of sandstone rocks
With here and there some curious band,
Methought, "How exquisite those locks,
Whose sheen their braiding velvet mocks."

Some bashful sea, 'twas plainly shown,
Once had not kissed its present beach,
But since more venturesome had grown :
"Were yonder maids," I mused, "in reach,
One might a clear deduction teach."

Ceased sadly soon the lecturer's lore ;
The sylphs that woke my fancies fled.
Now, when recalling days of yore,
I wonder oft, though youth is sped,
"Did each of all those darlings wed?"

DIANA'S APOLOGY.

I NEVER liked the men at all,—
Cannot abide them, great or small,
 One only sparing ;
What use they be, not I can tell ;
And one alone to love me well
 Has had the daring.

Who will may laud in lofty rhyme
Stiff blooms from some outlandish clime
 In fond amazement :
Let each his own experience tell ;—
The only flower I love right well
 Clings round my casement.

One learns in telescopic lore
Of distant stars, unspied before,
 Just made out clearly :
The new-found star I love to see
Its steady rays on simple me
 Sheds far more nearly.

O chatter not of lures of men,—
The craft by which, the season when
 Might some have chained me.
I know but one in manly form
Who owned the strength my heart to storm :
 He artless gained me.

With smiles I watch my armour rust ;
My heirlooms all to him I trust
 For better carriage ;
To him alone, 'mongst many knights,
Surrendered go my feudal rights—
 The rites of marriage.

INCOGNITA'S PORTRAIT.

MIDST in my soul a throne,
Sweet, have I set you,
Though, if truth's whole be known,
Ne'er have I met you ;—

Not yet in any scenes
Marked your true features ;—
'Mongst names of many queens
Could not repeat yours.

Though by sad fate your dear
Self is unknown to me,
Pictured, your nature here
Truly is shown to me.

None who existed could
Call you unkindly ;
Friends, if you listed, would
Worship you blindly.

Lo! from the glossy hair
 Round your head clustering
 (Saint carved in mossy lair
 Never wore juster ring),

Curls, to some magic rule
 Springing pursuant,
 As from pelagic school
 Bowed fish leap truant.

None on your noon-bright teeth
 E'er could a fleck trace,—
 Snowdrops in moon-white wreath,—
 Pearls for a necklace.

Thoroughly your fairy lips
 Love-pangs profound allay ;
 Past them oft airy trips
 Charmful some roundelay.

Ears have you, paly shells
 Where the strand's glister is,
 Unto which daily tells
 Truth's tide fresh mysteries ;—

Eyes, if one thinks of them,
 Fountains of gladness,
 Sure—to who drinks of them—
 Source of love's madness.

What does my wife near
Hint o'er my shoulder?
"Dotage for life, my dear,
Put off till older.

"Ere you, devoted, sir,
Frothed with such passion,
Never you noted her
Dress out of fashion ;—

"Such as maids wilefully
Long ago banished,
Cut in a style fully
Forty years vanished ;—

"Facts which prove, nearly gauged,—
If she alive is—
Dowsabel clearly aged
Threescore and five is."

VESPERTILIO.

THEY sat at eve upon a stile,
A rural stile, together ;
And he had just the question put,
The weighty question "Whether . . ."

And she—she had an answer made ;
But was not quite decided :
"It was a matter difficult ;
She marry would—provided."

"How horrible," she said, "to find,
When everything was over,
And we were written man and wife,
My heart was still a rover !

"It's true, dear Frank, we've been good friends,
As well in deed as letter ;—
But are you sure that I'm the girl
Alone your heart to fetter ?

“ You see, I have not known you long ;—
Scarce comprehend what love is ;
And could not talk in lover’s mode
With ‘ ducks’ and ‘ lovie-dovies’.”

Said he, “ Without you, though my life
Devoid must be of pleasure,
I would not contravene your will
For all fair England’s treasure.

“ I scarcely dared to hope, indeed,
To meet with approbation
From one whose beauty might command
The homage of a nation.”

“ Now do not talk such stuff,” she laughed ;
“ Your flattery waxes grosser ;”
But, thus reproving him, she edged,
It seemed, a little closer.

The eve is soft, the crimsoned sun
Below the hill is creeping ;
And twitter from the grove declares
The birds will soon be sleeping.

The cows afield have ceased to roam
’Mongst buttercup and daisy,
And listless lie, or chew the cud
With motion lax and lazy.

Eve's sleepy spells have charmed the maid :
She sits with head reclining ;
And welcome seems the sturdy arm
Just now her waist entwining.

"Surely," he cries, "you're not asleep,
But only make-believing ;"
And no response is heard except
Her bosom's gentle heaving.

"Oh, could we thus for ever sit,
My joy were past all speaking ;—
How sweet my lot !" reflects the youth,
When, lo ! a sudden squeaking.

The maiden starts with timorous cry ;
Her rosy dreams have fled ;
She might have fallen, but for him
Who by her side is seated.

Some sluggish bat, well-pleased to show
He is not always napping,
Has flown too near the maiden's hair,
And, caught in it, is flapping.

"O drag the horrid thing away ;
I'm sure a bite it gave me !
I dreamt that I was being killed,
And none but you could save me !"

He throws the leathery monster off ;
Her wound is quick in healing.
“ Dear Frank,” she said.—What followed next
Is past my art’s revealing.

But somehow—to be kept, may be,
From bats, which now she dreaded,
Or wishing not for better mate,
’Twas Frank, ere long, she wedded.

PER CONTRA.

WHEN secure behind a nettle,
Thought a fly to prove its mettle ;
Near a frog he dared to settle,
And was caught.

A too fond and sure young person
Set her eyes a spouse for worse on :
Soon she longed to lie a hearse on—
Overwrought.

A most saint-like over-reacher,
Garbed as cleric, failed as preacher ;
For what shows an honest teacher
Can't be bought.

In a married pair's dissensions
Mixed a sage with best intentions ;
Then together, history mentions,
Him they fought.

A colossus, aged, but flirty,
Signed her notes "Your little Gerty,"—
Rouged and dressed for under thirty,—
All for nought.

Asked an athlete, inly glowing,
"Now, could aught improve my rowing?"
Cried a critic: "There's no knowing
Till you're taught."

Sighed a poet, "My vocation
Should have roused a grateful nation:"
He just missed a grand ovation,—
So he thought.

And he covered reams, admiring
What his blandest friends termed "tiring,"—
Works for butter-wraps and firing
Solely sought.

AFTERNOON CALLERS.

SOME hydrocephalous idiot,
That whines in its mother's arms—
She a slatternly, hollow-faced creature,
Her ear-rings her only charms ;—

The shabby-respectable scriv'ner,
Who seldom gets meat to his bread,
And often must painfully ponder
The choice betwixt that and a bed ;—

The wheezy, rheumatic, old woman
Who, falling, has broken her wrist,—
Much like, in her want and her squalor,
A tumble-down mill without grist ;—

Some bandaged, some limping, some coughing—
A stud that scarce any one grooms—
Such make up the bulk of the callers
In hospital out-patient rooms.

THE VILLAGE MAIDEN'S MESSAGE.

VERSES FOR A "PSEUDO-REALISTIC"* CRITIC.

DEAR dada, mother wants you back
As quickly as may be,
For uncle's called with cousin Jack,
To take a cup of tea.

Will you, please, buy a jar of jam
At Mrs Gubbin's store,
And just a quarter-pound of ham,
But not a penn'orth more.

For wastefulness is far from right,
And all those welks she boiled,
Unless we eat them up to-night,
Will certainly be spoiled.

* See Edmond Holmes, *What is Poetry*, p. 46.

And mother says I'm not to wait,—
My hair's in paper still,
And seeing my untidy pate
Would nigh make uncle ill.

And after food, says mother, please
Try to coax uncle out :
She can't do washing-up at ease
With company about.

A WINTER LETTER.

(To H. A. W.)

I WOULD it were given me still to hear
The voice of those whom I left to-day :
No more does the sound of their footsteps near
Remind me Heaven is not far away.

Yon blue-eyed sweet prattlers with gold-flecked hair
Appear now part of some happy dream,—
A vision that trembled in desert air,
Or fays in masques such as poets scheme.

I ask of myself, "Am I really born,
And live in a land where such dear things be?—
The actual hands did I grasp this morn
Of human angels with love for me?"

If so, does it matter that plains and hills
Look leafless up to a leaden sky?—
In memory, mocking all wintry ills,
Bloom flowers of friendship that ne'er will die.

DE GUSTIBUS.

AUTHORS not yet in Paradise—

Critics have sometimes wished they were—
So rhyme that “nighs” must stand for “nice”

And “his” for “hiss,” if read with care.

Yet others, odd as it appears,

With parlous pedantry possessed,
Would rather slave at verse for years
Than have it fail the rhymster’s test.

SOLO.

'Tis sweet with the poetic few
To rise above the vulgar crew ;—
To feel one's eye in frenzy rolling,—
One's pen along the paper bowling ;—
To know that genius, yea, that my sense
Allows me every kind of license.

Such noble art as dwells in me
From rules of grammar sets one free :
Syntax and prosody are slaves
That crouch whene'er the poet raves.
Out, out, ye little folk that scorn,—
Ye made-up creatures, I was born !
Ye desert dust, behold in me the palm
That towers above you all, serene and calm.

THE HEAVENS.

FROM THE GERMAN OF LÖWENSTEIN.

“How high the heavens I fain would know.”
I’ll straightway tell it thee :—
If thou as swift as bird could’st go,
On lightsome wings could’st flee ;
And could thy course ay upward tend
To yonder blue afar,
Until thy journey had its end
At some resplendent star—
If there thou should’st an angel greet,
How high the heavens would’st learn,
“My child,” he saith, full well I weet,
“Myself can not discern.
Yet further still for answer hie
To where yon starlet smiles ;
Nor need’st thou haste,—there’s but to fly
A hundred thousand miles.”
But if that little star thou reach,
What hear’st thou ?—Still the selfsame speech !
And fly thou on and on through space,—
From star to star, from place to place,
None knows to give thee word again ;
Thou still wilt ask, and ask in vain,
How high the heavens’ great vault is thrown ;
For that, my child, knows God alone.

INVOCATION TO THE SUN.

AFTER A PROSE TRANSLATION FROM THE FINNISH.

WELCOME, Sun, thy visage showing,
Momently more golden glowing.
Risen, morn's resplendent star,
'Scaped from 'neath the foam afar,
Thou, the fir-clump's summit quitting,
Like an aureate cuckoo flitting,
Dazzling fair as silver dove,
Winn'st at last the vault above,
Wending lustily to-day,
E'en as erst, thine ancient way.
Grant us yet, in years to be,
Glad, betimes thy face to see.
Give, O bounteous source of wealth,
Homeward safe return in health ;
Send us game secured with ease,
Quarry prone for hand to seize,
Prey that pointed hook will please.—
Jocund hie thy realm around ;
Reaching then thy journey's bound,
Rest at eve in joy profound.

VERSE FOR CHILDREN.



MY SPOTTY.

FROM the Market, London city,
When both underfed and small,
Came my rabbits : each was pretty,
But my Spotty best of all.

We were sure the name was Spotty
Of this most demure of does,
For her forehead bore a blotty-
Looking patch above the nose.

In return for treasure lavished
On unstinted greens and oats,
She at last our vision ravished
With the glossiest of coats.

Spotty seemed to think that resting
Might impair her fortunes much,
And was daily heard protesting
Till we oped her well-scratched hutch.

A big jump to earth then taking,
Like a dart she used to fly,
But next minute halted, shaking
Her one lop-ear off her eye.

Oft, some sudden whim obeying,
Turned our Spotty acrobat,
And askew would skip when playing,
And quite scandalize the cat.

Or, when pussy least suspected,—
Having down for quiet lain,
Spotty stalked her till, detected,
Off she frantic frisked again.

She was wont to watch us eating
While she begging sought a scrap ;
But if fruitless her entreating,
She just leapt upon one's lap.

She was such a guileless liver,—
Had so many a pretty way,
That we could not but forgive her
When she stormed our breakfast tray ;—

When we found her calmly faring
On our fish or new-made bread,—
At our butter grown so daring,
She for nought would turn her head.

We forgave her, too, for nipping—
She indeed no malice bore—
When from milk-jugs hoisted dripping
To her saucer on the floor.

And we overlooked her fretting
With her teeth our counterpane :
She, of course, relief was getting
For an over-active brain.

But when, full of zest for living,
She in coke to burrow tried,
Was her error past forgiving ;
For 'twas thus poor Spotty died.

And I could not help the feeling
That some angel-child, at play,
Had with pious lures been stealing
Our pet Spotty's soul away.

COMPARISONS.

SAID the Cock to the Owl,
"You have worth as a fowl,
But allow me to state my surprise
That your beak is so strong,
And your ears are so long,
And so staring and big your round eyes."

Said the Owl to the Cock,
"It of course is a shock
To discover you find me so plain ;
But if home-truths you beg,
Sure as chick comes from egg,
I can render a few back again.

"I intend no abuse,
But your comb is no use
Any more than a flaunting red rag.
And why should you trail
Extra plumes in your tail,
And permit those long wattles to wag ?

“With my beak in a trice
I can catch nimble mice,
Whose least movements my long ears discern ;
With my goggles, remark,
I can fly in the dark—
A distinction you never will earn.”

THE CHICKS THAT SAW THE WORLD.

SAID Mr Cock to Mrs Hen,
"Can you a moment spare?
May I remind you that to-day
Is held the annual fair?"

"And though our jaunts have made us wise,
For much we both have seen,
Our numerous little feathered ones
From home have never been.

"I think they ought to see the world,
And mix with other birds."
Quoth Mrs Hen, "I quite perceive
The wisdom of your words."

And so with many a cluck, cluck, cluck,
She made the youngsters run :
"Your father wishes you," she said,
"To have a little fun ;

"So all of you get ready quick,
To trip it two by two,
As pupils out of boarding-schools
Are always trained to do."

Soon down the path, in double file,
The chicks are seen to walk.
“Now,” said the mother, “careful be,
And don’t to strangers talk.”

But, sad to say, these chicks forgot,
Before they reached the fair,
Their worthy mother’s good advice
And words of tender care.

“Just come along,” exclaimed a drake,
“And see this curious snail ;”
But, while it looked, an artless chick
He gobbled, head and tail.

“I want a talk with some of you,”
Exclaimed a rat polite :
What more he said to one poor chick
Has never come to sight.

“My pretty dears,” said Mrs Fox,
“I’m sure you’ve missed your way ;
You’ve only to rely on me,
No more to go astray.”

And twelve she lured beneath the ground,
Her children to regale :
One chick alone, I fear, escaped
To tell this doleful tale.

PUSSY.

My darling cat, whene'er I see
Thy beauteous eyes upturned to me,—
When through those mild green orbs I view
Thy nature beaming, good and true,
I prize thee more than countless gold :
Than thee, I would not wealth untold.

And when thy charming voice I hear—
That sweet soprano, soft and clear,
And when I see thy smiling face,—
Thy dainty limbs,—thy matchless grace,
I feel, Grimalkin, having thee,
I want not any joys that be.

KITCHEN COMPANY.

MIDNIGHT had struck. The Persian cat
Had long looked fast asleep ;
And pit-a-pat the pretty mice
Crept from their holes to peep.

The cook had gone upstairs, but left
A heaped-up fire of coke ;
A cockroach, out upon his beat,
Stopped by the grate, and spoke :—

“ Our ancestors in foreign parts
Were sure a wretched lot :
No slave had they to kindle fires
To keep their homesteads hot.

“ Our cook for us expressly throws
Those crumbs upon the floor :
Creatures so worshipful as we
Cannot have lived before ! ”

“Come, friends, and taste a new-found treat !”
The jovial beetle cried,—
“Treacle and beer within this box ;—
Be careful how you slide.”

As puss said sagely, “Odd events
In little lives will hap :”
The beetles, greedy wretches, soon
Were swarming in a trap.

Before the fire a cricket basked
Her sturdy sons beside,
And, while her husband music made,
She beamed on them with pride.

“In all my days I never saw,”
The mother said, at length,
“Such charming boys,—such wondrous limbs
For shapeliness and strength.

“One’s brain should match one’s body, dears :
Rich pulp suits handsome rind.
Now sit you still ; I’ll tell you much
To educate the mind.

“Those foolish beetles, caught just now,
Prattled as though insane,
Proving, should any person doubt,
The vice of being vain.

“ To pet a cockroach never once
Entered our wise cook’s head :
For us, of course, she lights the fire ;
For us the crumbs are spread.”

“ But mother,” came a youngster’s voice,
“ At crumbs I’ve seen her frown ;
And Christmas last we nearly froze
When she went out of town.”

“ Good little crickets,” cried the dame,
“ Are seen, but seldom heard :
To think that cook neglected us
Is monstrously absurd.

“ I recollect that Christmas well.
The cook, despite the snow,
Sore wished to see her friends, so I
Permitted her to go.

“ Though wilfully she won’t waste food
On mice and beetles black,
Her one consuming thought is this :—
‘ My crickets nought shall lack.’”

“ Is she, indeed, so fond of us ?”
Exclaimed the sharpest lad ;
“ I heard cook scream, the other day,
‘ Those crickets drive me mad !’”

Said then his sire, "What sweeter proof
Of love could cricket need?
She longs to imitate my call,
But cannot quite succeed.

"She counts more dear that human song
What stupids term my 'creak':
The thought she has not learnt it yet
With frenzy pales her cheek.

"To live for crickets all their days
She thinks good cooks designed.
Well, let me mention something else
To prove her loving mind.

"Knowing that clever, wakeful cats
At crickets sometimes spring,
She chose, to scare away the mice,
Yon sleepy Persian thing."

"Sleepy, forsooth," loud yelled the cat,
In sudden rage upsprung:—
"You little bundle of conceit,
I'll make you hold your tongue."

"O mother, what's it all about?"
The youthful crickets said,
But got no answer, their mamma
Down a deep hole had fled.

At dawn the frightened cricket-dame
Over her children leant,
Saying, "Last night took place, I fear,
An awkward incident.

"Your father simply uttered facts
Patent to any clown ;
But cats, unlike us crickets, see
Great truths all upside down."

JUMBO'S INVITATION.

I LOVE you, dear Bunny—
I cannot too much !
All rabbits are charming
When out of the hutch.

That's why I love wild ones,
Whose coats are but brown,
Far more than the well-marked
Tame rabbits of town.

I came a long journey,
Dear Bunny, believe,
To hold with you converse :
I could not deceive.

Though walking with Mary,
My mistress's maid,
Not I by entreaties
Near her could be stayed ;

For far in the distance
I saw you, my Dearest,
So scampered away by
The road that was nearest.

I know you are fond, Sweet,
Of taking the air,
So, pray, for a ramble
A little while spare.

I beg you to mark how
This marjoram grows—
That leaf in particular
Under my nose.

For you I reserve it,
Renouncing the treat,
Though, as doubtless you wot, Love,
I live on green meat.

All persons of sense must
Reject as mean lies
The fable that dogs
Any fleshly food prize.

As yours not exactly
Are shapen our jaws ;
Some difference also
Is seen in our paws.

I own, too, we haven't
The same sort of ear ;
But still that we're cousins
Is surely most clear.

Now, please taste the majoram :
Is it not nice ?
Quoth Jumbo, the spaniel ;
And then, in a trice,

He seizes poor Bunny
Across his soft back ;—
One hears the great teeth
Coming close with a crack ;

And Bunny perceives,
As oft others, too late,
To flatt'ers who listens
May learn but his fate.

THE OMEN.

THE raven, for a little joke,
Gave suddenly a solemn croak
As Colin, far less wise than he,
Walked open-mouthed beside his tree.
“O pray,” cried Colin, “spare my life!”
And home ran trembling to his wife.

MRS MIDGET AND LADY DORA FIDGET,

OR

THE WHITE MOUSE AND THE DORMOUSE.

DAME MIDGET looked as neat a mouse
As ever learned to bite,
With bodice, skirt, and silken hose
All of the purest white.

My Lady Fidget, living near,
Went always dressed in dun ;
But, then, her eyes were bright as beads,
And sparkled in the sun.

Some friends suggested Mrs M.
On Lady F. should call ;
And soon the former sallied forth,
As bright as belle for ball.

Now Mrs Midget's eyes were weak,
Especially by day,
And so, when she was out of doors,
She somehow lost her way.

“At last,” she cried, “I’ve reached the house,”
And gave a loud “rat-tat,”
Ere noticing upon the door
“Court Butcher, Thomas Cat.”

Emitting then a little scream,
Fast down the steps she tripped,
But caught her tail between her toes,
And on the pavement slipped.

That moment Lady Fidget happed
To walk across the way,
And uttered in surprise these words :
“Well, really! Lack-a-day!

“Why, Mrs Midget, who’d have thought
To find you sitting here?
Whatever do you do it for?
The folk are staring, dear.

“Such skittishness in one so young
As *I* could be excused ;
Your middle-aged dignity
Should not be thus abused.”

“Tut-tut,” retorted Midget quick,
“I’m not so very old,—
Belike not much in front of you,
If candid truth be told.

"You might, instead of lecturing,
Assist a fallen friend."

"Of course," was the reply, "I hope
To-day with me you'll spend."

So off they ambled, side by side,
To Lady Fidget's flat.

"Pray let me, dear," pressed Lady F.,
"Relieve you of your hat."

Then, fluttered as the hostess felt
With hospitable care,
Instead of hanging up the hat,
She placed it on a chair.

And Midget, who full weary was
With wandering up and down,
Whose sight, too, sun and dust had dimmed,
Upon that chair sat down.

"I hope you're comfortable there"
Said Lady F., "my Sweet."
"If you don't mind," rejoined her friend,
"I'll choose another seat."

But scarcely had she settled down
When, with a piteous wail,
Ejaculated Lady F.,
"You're sitting on my tail!"

After a quiet cosy chat,
A rich repast arrived,
Its courses with elaborate care
By clever cooks contrived.

Grilled cheese they ate, and sandwiches
Of cake and Yorkshire ham,
Chipped ratafias with oyster sauce,
Hot shrimps with cherry jam.

Crickets and shortbread fricasseed,
Bon-bons with ribbon tied,
Baked lobster served with gooseberry fool,
And ling in treacle fried.

At last the tablecloth was cleared
Of tarts and savoury stews :
“Oh, by the way!” cried Midget then,
“I clean forgot the news.

“My cousin-german, Mr Rat,
When coming home last night—
The fact is, he was out too late—
Received a dreadful fright.

“Not many yards from Mouse’s Club—
He scarce had left the place—
Grimalkin, horrid highwayman,
Quite suddenly gave chase.

“ And, had my cousin not been fleet,
I really cannot tell—
Why, what’s the matter, Dora dear?
You surely can’t be well.”

Now Fidget, I forgot to say,
Both in and out of season,
To sleepiness was prone to yield ;—
She always found some reason.

And there she was, before her friend,
Rolled up, a drowsy ball :
“ Oh, please excuse,” she gaping said,
“ I surely heard it all.

“ You said your cousin’s German brat
Waked foaming in a fit ;—
Some spiteful minx had tarred his gloves.”—
Said Midget, “ Not a bit.

“ I’m sorry to have made you nod ;
Here’s something more inviting :—
‘ The One-armed Ghost,’ a Christmas tale
With incidents exciting.

“ You know our grand baronial hall,
Which ancient records mention ;—
Fidget, my Sweet, I fondly trust
You give me your attention.

“They say, at night, when all is still,
And twelve the church-chimes strike—
Oh, Fidget, Love, I see you yawn :
This tale do you mislike ?

“Just listen. At this witching hour,
One hears a sullen roaring ;—
Now, this is the most thrilling part ;—
Why, Fidget, you are snoring !”

In vain poor Midget plied her task.
Quoth Fidget, “Very creepy !
Fine situation—but, I feel
Intolerably sleepy.”

Cried Midget, “Even this grand tale
She thinks is nothing worth ;
A thorough snooze she far prefers
To all things else on earth.

“My Lady’s positively rude,
Despite her birth, I say !”
Then Midget gathered up her skirts,
And homeward hied her way.

Next morning Mrs Midget called
At Lady F.’s abode :
’Twas half-past ten, but only blinds
The bedroom windows showed.

“ I’ll tell my mistress,” said the maid ;

“ Be pleased a chair to take.”

“ Don’t trouble,” Mrs Midget snarled,

“ Perhaps she’s not awake.

“ In sooth, you can’t do better, girl,

Than let the poor thing lie :

My card reads plainly ‘p.p.c.’,

Which means, of course, ‘ Good-bye ’.”

THE GALLANT AND THE LADY.

YES, the frog was too hot ;
So he chose a cool spot,
By the green water's edge,
Near a sheltering sedge.

Though his slumbers were sound,
He awoke with a bound ;
For the cry that he heard,
Which his whole spirit stirred,
Was " I'm drowned, O I'm *drowned* ! "

He looked wildly around,
And perceived, much surprised,
Not a fairy disguised,
But a mousie most fair,
Who was gasping for air.

With the aid of a stick,
The frog landed her quick ;
Then, with left hand on breast,
As her fingers he pressed,

He exclaimed, "I regret
That the water is wet ;
But you kindle a flame
Which should dry you, sweet dame."

"Now, no compliments, please,"
Said Miss Mouse with a sneeze.
"If your meaning I catch,
You allude to a match.
Let me tell you, Sir, straight,
That the water I hate,
And could never contrive,
With your lordship to dive.
Then you hop and I run.
See my tail.—You have none.
Any mouse would admit
For a frog you have wit ;
But we could not agree,
So I'm off, as you see."
And, before her knight knew,
She had vanished from view.

Said the frog, blackly frowning,
"That's the sylph saved from drowning !
Well, she showed all along
That her wits were not strong.
What more senseless could be
Than her treatment of me ?"

But no plaudits around
Dubbed his wisdom profound.
And I know in despite,
When he strolled out next night
In the thick of a fog,
He proposed to Miss Frog.

THE SAILOR'S FAREWELL.

My dear handsome Willie has hurried away ;
Far at sea you his ship may espy ;
No more can I talk with my Willie to-day,
I have waved him my last good-bye.

When wailed I, "How sad I can't follow on wings,
As a cushat to perch on your hand!"
Quoth Willie, "No sea-birds would dream of such things,
And my mates would not understand."

"Delightful," I said, "as a fish in the sea,
Swimming after, to worship my pet!"
"Imagine," laughed Willie, "how awkward 'twould be
If a fisherman cast a net."

"You teasing old Will," I exclaimed with a smile,
"You are almost too full of your play :
What creature can comfort me ever the while
From his home my own Love's away?"

“Don’t fret,” he replied, “when you see me again,
I’ll bring you a necklace to wear ;
And, feeling around you a heavy gold chain,
You can fancy my arm is there.

“And likewise a parrot, red-tailed, with grey wings,
My desolate darling I’ll buy ;
Whenever it chatters and whistles and sings,
She can think that her sweetheart’s nigh.”

“You never,” I cried, “will have finished your fun !
To you I need scarcely repeat,
No treasures from any land seen of the sun
Could make up for your absence, Sweet.”

His ship on the ebbing tide bore him away
Where sunbeams were sinking. Ah me !
Already the light of my life’s happy day
Had been merged in the Past’s grim sea.

SOMETHING BETTER.

I WOULD not be a fish,
And swim in waters blue,
With nothing all the livelong day
To think about or do,

Except perhaps to catch
Some other smaller fish,
And fat myself for being hooked,
And eaten off a dish.

Oh ! no, I much prefer
To sit on form or stool,
And work, quite glad I'm not a fish
That cannot go to school.

MARY'S DEPARTURE.

SHEPHERDS who watched thee go can tell
Why weeps with threefold flood the well,
My Mary.

To catch the tears thy loss hath made,
For pails one properly should raid
A dairy.

The very lambkins moan and cry
Because no more may they espy
Their fairy,

Who through their meadows used to stray;
And, loving, watched their antics gay
And airy.

Of blooming now, with sadness ill,
The flowers forlorn, from dale to hill,
Are chary.

The sobbing winds were heard to say,
“ Dear sun, of smiling once to-day
Be wary.

“ The clouds have ordered suits of black,
And everything must cry ‘ Alack !’
And do its best to hasten back
Sweet Mary.”

THE STUDENT TO HIS CAT.

LUXURIOUS lounge, right dreamy all day,
At the dinner-gong's summons asleep will you stay?
No, you get up politely, to show me the way.

Dull dunces might deem, as you drowse the day long,
That your love for your owner was doubtfully strong;
But disturbing his studies, of course, would be wrong.

When I enter the dining-room, first you are there;
And, a model of manners, you mount on a chair,
While you sniff, just to teach me for food to prepare.

Then, in case I forgetful of duties should be,
And should fail, from philosophy, pheasant to see,
You insert a few claws, with much grace, in my knee.

And again and again, when you know that too much
Or too fast I am eating, you give me a touch:
Since in kindness you mean this, I take it as such.

To make sure that a meal for your master is fit,
You will often oblige by accepting a bit,
And, benign, on his shoulder soft purring will sit.

Then duly to keep him, when dinner is o'er,
From forgetting the folk that lack food at his door,
You e'en pose as a beggar, and press him for more.

FAIR-DAY.

PERCHED by the casement are Flora and May ;
They bask in the fresh summer air ;
Their thoughts are too full for much study to-day,
For father has gone to the fair.

Father will bring, if he can, in his pack
A dolly with moveable eyes,
Hair curly, a dress that will button at back,
And a pinafore braided that ties.

Mother's to have just the sweetest pink dress
That brand-new half-sovereign will buy ;
And something for baby besides, you may guess,
Dear father could never deny.

Better kind father there could not exist,
The two little sisters agree ;
And never will parent more fondly be kissed
Than theirs, when returned for his tea.

BEACHING THE BOAT.

No time for play!
Push away! Push away!
Hear the keel screech
On the shingly beach.
Heave-ho! Heave-ho! Well do we know,
By turning the capstan, to make the boat go.

Light seemed the boat
Yestereve when afloat.
Moving her full
Means now a stiff pull.
Heave-ho! Heave-ho! Surely, if slow,
By shoving together, we make the boat go.

Tossing at sea
May with fishes agree :
Gladly we land
On the firmer strand.
Heave-ho! Heave-ho! Now will we show
How coiling a cable can make a boat go.

MY PET'S MESSAGE.

LOVED father, evening's come at last,
And hard you've worked all day ;
Hang in the mill your dusty coat,
And hither come to play :
I've picked some pretty buds for you,
And have a world to say.

For hours the water-wheel has whirled
With harsh and wearying din ;
It deadens quite the thrushes' trills,
When warbling they begin :
"To spoil the wood-bird's evening song,"
Sweet mother says, "is sin."

The sun with day will soon shake hands,
And turn his back, and go.
I want to stroke your burnished locks,
Bright with the after-glow,—
Sit on your knee, and hear your tales
In accents soft and low.

I long to nestle in your arms,
To feel that you are mine,
And, happy, watch your deep-blue eyes
With warm affection shine :
A "father's love," dear mother says,
"Partakes of the divine."

LULLABY.

LULLABY, baby, the bees are in bed ;
Dusky moths sip from the blossoms instead.
Pastures, late lit with the buttercup's hue,
Pale in the moonshine, shed weepingly dew.
Slugs and shy snails, dead-asleep all the day,
Creep from the homes of their hiding away.
Wantoning sundown and morning between,
Mushrooms their canopies spread on the green.
Toads fat and lumbering, lively at last,
Beetles and earwigs are gobbling up fast.
Bats from the steeple are stirring the air ;
Owlets with monster eyes nibbling mice scare.
Rats through their corridors scurrying squeak ;
Crickets come out of cramped coverts to creak.
Worms to the upper world warily pass ;
Glowworms are lighting their lamps in the grass.
Busy at dark though so many folk be,
Sleep is the best thing for baby and me.
Lullaby, baby, till dawn in the skies
Lifts the pink lids of our daisy-buds' eyes.

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